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A spontaneous liberality

By Noël Annan

L. P. WILKINSON:

A Century of King's 1873-1972

183pp. £7.

0 9502450 5 4

Kingsmen of a Century 1873-1972

394pp. £10.50

0 9502450 4 6

Cambridge: King's College.

"I warrant you imagine", wrote Thomas Gray, just three weeks a freshman, to his friend Horace Walpole, "that people in one College know the Customs of others; but you mistake, they are quite little Societies by themselves ... What passes for wit in one would not be understood if it were carried to another, thus the Men of Peterhouse, Pembroke and Clare-Hall of course must be Tories; those of Trinity Rakes; of King's Scholars, of Sidney Wigs, of St John's Worthies men and so on ... Freshmen are apt to make such confident judgments upon arrival. But some may feel - *mutatis* of course *mutandis* - that the future poet had a good nose for Cambridge gossip.

There are two indisputable facts about King's College, Cambridge. It is exceptionally beautiful and it has always been odd. King Henry VI, its founder, inspired by William of Wykeham, intended his scholars at Eton all to go on to King's, so that the College became almost the exclusive preserve of Etonians as its sister at Oxford, New College, was for Wykehamists. It is not quite true that for over four centuries none but Etonians entered the College; after the Reformation until the end of the eighteenth century a few Fellow Commoners from other schools were admitted. But stricter notions prevailed in the nineteenth century and it was not until 1856 that the reformers were able to get to work. They could not begin earlier because wicked Provost Thackeray exercised his right to refuse to allow any business of which he disapproved to be brought before the Governing Body; and as no business which contained a scintilla of change saw the light of day the reformers could only twitter disapproval.

In the second volume, Mr Wilkinson presents in detail the lives of many of the men who passed through the College, grouping them according to the calling in which they made their mark later in life. If you regard Oxbridge colleges as self-regarding, self-satisfied, socially divisive, irrelevant to the nation's future, these volumes are not for you. But if you want to know something about an idiosyncratic academic society, which irritates other colleges in Cambridge but is admired by individuals in them and which may tell us a little about our culture by its fancies, its follies, its ideals and deliberate unwieldiness -

Even after Thackeray died it took time to throw open the College to those from other schools. The new Provost and the reformers moved at once and were commended by the Royal Commissioner in 1860 for their "spontaneous liberality". But it took eleven years for the Fellows to be released from their oaths and to get the new Statutes; and eight years later an eccentric non-resident Fellow appealed to the Bishop of Lincoln as Visitor, who without taking legal advice gave a ruling which upset the College's plans to create scholarships for non-Etonians. It was not until 1873 that the first non-Etonian scholar was admitted, a Rugbyman who was to become the father of Rupert Brooke. L. P. Wilkinson chooses this date to start his two volumes and he ends ninety-nine years later, when the first women were admitted as undergraduates.

Since 1882 (the date of the next Royal Commission) most colleges have published an annual report, and very boring most of them are. The annual report of King's College, however, is enlivened - if that is the word - by its obituaries. In 1929 J. T. Sheppard became Vice-Provost and began to expand what had been the bare bones of men's careers into full-scale obituaries. This career of love is today in Mr Wilkinson's hands and the tradition has enabled him to write a short history of the way the College grew to its present size from a handful of bachelor resident Etonian Fellows and thirty-four students, and also to give an account of its ethos, which has changed over the years yet preserved its curious individuality.

Nevertheless, parties were bound to form at a moment of tension; and in late Victorian days they can be said to have resembled two cricket teams, the Gentlemen and Players - those to whom the Eton connection was paramount and those who wanted to broaden the College's horizons. The "Best Set" in King's were the Etonians, led by A. C. Benson and Arthur Tilley; they decided who from other schools might be admitted to it and were well-dressed, *comme il faut*, cultivated, Christian gentlemen. The Players, like Wedd, E. M. Forster's mentor, bubbled with subversive ideas. When Robert Ross was an undergraduate, he took his lead from them and in his first year published in the *Granta*

an unflattering account of the College which deplored the Etonian ascendancy and advocated that Oscar Browning should be made Vice-Provost - a proposal palpably inspired by O.B. himself. The Tutor of the College, Tilley, suggested to some of the Best Set dining with him that they should throw Ross into the fountain. This they did, and in those days they were doing nothing peculiar. What was peculiar was the reaction in King's. The sense of outrage at this lack of tolerance was such that Tilley was compelled by the College Council to make a public apology at Hall dinner; and he later had to resign his tutorship.

The Players too were captivated by Etonians. Bradshaw, the descendant of the regicide who presided at the trial of Charles I, was the epitome of the tolerant, hospitable scholar. He and Oscar Browning were the great encouragers of shy, mistrusting freshmen from minor schools and the allies of the Seallywags as they called themselves. Yet, here again, the party was not ideological. Bradshaw lived by the spirit but he was the friend of Karl Pearson who, as an undergraduate, had compelled the College to abolish a freshman's exam in Divinity. O.B. kept a crucifix on his door to "frighten the agnostics"; but when an undergraduate presented a petition in Hall dinner to the High Table "in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord", the sweating silence was broken by O.B. "Would you mind passing the potatoes?" In 1889 Provost Austen Leigh made a speech deploring the existence of any Best Set and M. R. James set out as Dean to abolish the division. The Eton era finally came to an end when Provost Durnford died, in 1926, the last of the old order who became a Fellow, returned to Eton as a master and then came back to King's, in his case as Provost, which he celebrated by appointing his nephew as Domus Bursar, a post for which the nephew lacked some essential abilities.

Long before Durnford's death, however, these parties began to dissolve. The ideals of the grammar-school boys and those hardy middle-class specimens who had no love for their own public school began to permeate some of the Eton colleagues; even more significant, the num-

ber of Etonians who were appointed to staff Fellowships began to decline. The cosy, self-satisfied Gentlemen were faintly hostile to intellectual adventure. "We don't want James", Wedd was heard to murmur when the succession for the Provostship was being discussed. "We don't want James. James doesn't care for the intellect." James's reputation as one of the leading world authorities on medieval manuscripts might have been thought sufficient to dispose of this criticism. But it was true. James did not care for intellectual speculation or for the selfconscious pursuit of truth or for general ideas. He liked gossip and literary allusions, and years later, when Provost of Eton, he expressed his alarm that King's might elect Keynes as Provost; and for good reason.

For the most notable defection from the ranks of the gentlemanly party in the years of James's Provostship was Keynes himself. It was Keynes who, as a young Fellow before the First World War, was brutal enough to challenge Grant, the Etonian Bursar, with devastating analyses of the Bursar's financial policy, and he carried with him another Etonian Fellow, the future cryptographer, Dilwyn Knox, and a group of younger men who styled themselves the Young Turks and included good scholars such as Adcock and Charles Webster. The new party was again a two-party alignment, but the parties stood for principles which had little to do with the old battles at the turn of the century. These had been concerned with religious observance and gentlemanly behaviour. The new division was less social than moral.

The two new parties could be described as the Green Ties and the Black Ties. The Green Ties stood for the virtues of intellectual adventure, gaiety, pleasure, vitality. They also stood for sexual disreputability. They descended from both Oscar Browning and Lower Dickinson and their leaders were Sheppard and Keynes. The Black Ties were respectable, *bien-pensant* and the guardians of orthodox scholarship. Their leader was the economic historian "Honourable John" Clapham, and the staid, more conventional Fellows followed him, as did the older scientists. The height of their intellectual ideal was ability in solid research,

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whereas the Green Ties were always looking for promise... Promise of what? Of dazzling literary ability, of new heterodoxy, of flights in pure mathematical analysis. At their best they sought to discover a genius, the scholar who revolutionizes his subject and makes a breakthrough — as Keynes himself did when after thirty years in economics he published the *General Theory*. At their worst they confused promise with the art of being what was called "a natural Kingsman". The Green Ties cherished personality. They wanted attractive, if possible good-looking, witty, fascinating young Fellows — or if not witty and amusing, then full of heart and sensibility — above all devoted to the undergraduates; and the tradition of Bradshaw, O.B. and Lowes Dickinson of treating undergraduates as equals developed still further when after the war the undergraduates at King's began to call the younger dons by their Christian names.

King's had been eccentric in Victorian times by insisting that all undergraduates must read for honours. There were no pass men to treat the University as a prolongation of their public school and whose ambition was confined to getting a Blue. But even more unusual were the relations in the College between the senior and junior members. The ethos of King's owes an immense debt to Eton; not so much to those Oppidians who had the entrée to worldly power and usually went to Christ Church, but to the College. Of the 169, all Etonians, who came up between 1865-79, 143 became Fellows, schoolmasters, parsons,

lawyers, doctors, or went to India: very few became landowners. The younger Fellows had known the undergraduates in College in Eton and treated them as equals; and from this arose the friendliness and equality between dons and undergraduates which was to make King's unique in this respect among colleges before the First World War. The dons were not to be pedagogic disciplinarians leading on the rope the ascent up some academic mountain, hammering in pitons and pointing out toe-holds in the style of a German professor followed by his devoted pupils in seminar. They were, rather, to be companions opening up vistas by talking about new books, new ideas, new fashions in art. They were by no means all intellectuals; Prothro was, and so were Wedd and Lowes Dickinson; Nixon, Headlam, Oscar Browning and James were not. But what emerged over the years from this tradition was something for which King's became notorious in staid circles. Were such relationships, the great world asked, entirely pure?

Mr Wilkinson deals admirably with the homosexuality of that bachelor society in which young men moved from the cloister of their public schools to yet another masculine seminary at a time when girls were appendages at May Week or the rare birds of Newnham and Girton. Readers of David Newsome's excellent life of A. C. Benson will know that the typical kindly Victorian don, however romantic his language, never laid a finger on any young man. Oscar Browning was outraged when he was forced to leave Eton with the

imputation that his motives for befriending Curzon were suspect. Sheppard, when a young Fellow, was no different even if he went about proclaiming his infatuation for various handsome young men and tried to convince Lytton Strachey that to fall for a philistine was not necessarily evidence of a bad state of mind.

Lowes Dickinson was different. He fully understood his temperament, submissive and ardent, regarding himself as crippled by his homosexuality but distinguishing between his condition, which by the laws and conventions of his country was calamitous, and his actions, which were not in his judgment base. He had five great loves, with whom he sought a kind of physical satisfaction in different ways which the coarse will find comical and the sensitive full of pathos. When in 1931 he read to the Apostles a paper arguing that passionate love is distinct from deep friendship was not something he was ashamed of, he noted that the Society thought it was a lot of fuss about nothing.

In fact undergraduates who were practising homosexuals were not a post-First World War phenomenon. Alfred Brooke, the charming and sweet-natured brother of the poet, was notably promiscuous, but after the war the dons changed too. In both Trinity and King's, bachelor dons flourished, but with a difference. In Trinity the susceptible were divided into "good Trinity", old-style admirers rather than participants, and "bad Trinity", a tiny and discreet band. In King's things were more flamboyant. It would be a grotesque anachronism to imagine that some Kingsmen stole themselves "come out" with all the overtones of uncouth heroism and self-laceration which that phrase conveys; but it is certainly true that those who were active homosexuals did not much mind who knew it or what they said. "There was much jealousy and heart-burning," writes Mr Wilkinson, "but in the end most of the participants got married soon after going down."

Much of the notoriety was gossip, innuendo and high spirits, and most King's undergraduates passed through the College either oblivious of anything untoward or not much disposed to mind if they noticed. Nevertheless, in the early 1920s, when Provost Durnford died, the Black Ties had to be reconciled, and Keynes, who at that time had been living openly with Lydia Lopokova, withdrew from the contest. The Green Ties thereupon declared that at no price would they consent to Clapham moving from the Tutorship to the Lodge. When however the *tertium quid*, Rupert Brooke's uncle, resigned in 1933 there was little debate. Sheppard was elected and the Green Ties had triumphed.

It is not just piety which prompts Mr Wilkinson to praise his old teacher. Sheppard was the greatest Provost of the College in this century.

It is a hopeless task to convey his character (writes Mr Wilkinson). The attraction of his personality; the almost hypnotic power of those slightly protruding eyes, which had not been so patently benevolent; the dignity wittily varied with clowning; the histrionics and rhetoric; the splendid sense of humour and fun; the constitutional toughness, masquerading as senile debility; the inexhaustible interest in people and desire to help them; the egotism which yet did good by stealth; the total devotion to the College, which was yet an extension of the ego.

Sheppard had been in his youth an iconoclast and a Liberal in politics, a noted scoffer at Christianity, something of a dandy — a late riser who shaved each morning by Beatty while in bed — a young don whose high spirits waned during the First World War, cheer his Bloomsbury friends as well as Margot Asquith. Brought up a strict Baptist he enjoyed his sense of liberation. The entertainment he provided for undergraduates could not be described as lavish: a cup of tea and a slice of cake at ten o'clock was as far as it went; and the cake usually failed to materialize. His generosity took more practical forms. He would take an undergraduate on a Hellenic

cruise, or pay surreptitiously for a boy to come to Cambridge. He did not set his guests at their ease. There would be interminable silences and those who broke them were often roundly snubbed until some remark would strike his fancy and he would be off on a trail of inspired fantasy.

During his time as Provost Sheppard became a legend. His appearance was fantastic and memorable. He pranced about with a stick, his white hair flowed, he accosted strangers, he welcomed anyone from overseas. He was half-a-dozen characters from Dickens and also Dickens himself. Like Dickens, he adored acting and dramatizing his own situation: he was simultaneously the Brothers Cheeryble and Miss Miggs. Although he might shock his old agnostic friends by his religiosity and weary his colleagues by the dilatory way in which he conducted College meetings, maudering from anecdote to anecdote, he was in fact exceedingly clever at business. The wealth that Keynes created and hoarded gradually began to be used — and Sheppard saw that it was used for the benefit of the undergraduates. Prizes, travel grants, scholarships and studentships multiplied; legacies were turned always to their benefit; hostels were built for them; the studentships for the Common-wealth countries were created; amicable concords with colleges at Yale or in London were struck. Sheppard finished his Provostship by entertaining the King and Queen and by being knighted for making classical literature live for the common reader.

The Fellows rightly placed his passion for the old Arnoldian sweetness and light far above his tyrannicalness and light far above his tyrannicalness, and they voted him to be prolonged so that he was Provost for twenty years.

Yet it was Sheppard who more than any other man destroyed his own party. His irritability with intellectuals, his monologues against science and research, his preference for illusion to truth, grew with the years. There had indeed always been an ominous crack in the ranks of the triumphant Green Tie brigade. In a debate on the size and nature of the College at a Congregation long before the Second World War, Wedd — the same Wedd who had disparaged James for his fear of the intellect — had turned on Keynes. "You want to make the College Alexandria", so long as Keynes was there to press for the election of Frank Ramsey or Blackett, the Green Ties remained united.

But after the war when Keynes was dead, some of the younger Fellows who cared about the life of the mind were alienated when Sheppard used every feminine art in his feminine make-up and was above making a scene in order to impose his will whenever he was thwarted. The edges of the Green Tie party began to fray.

The party which succeeded them — if a party it was — could be called the Sociological Reformers. The Green Ties had gazed at themselves in the looking-glass, compared themselves to the staid academic and often philistine world of Cambridge, admired what they saw and tried to reproduce themselves by introducing idiosyncratic scholarship examination papers which they imagined would change teaching in the schools and make the boys in them more like the image of Kingsmen. The SRs began to ask whether King's was as it should be; why did it have so low a reputation in science? Why did those Fellows elected on promise publish so little and so few become professors? Was the College making the best use of its wealth — it lavished money on the welfare of its students but what did it do for research? Was it not futile to imagine that the schools were going to respond overnight to some initiative by one Oxbridge college — and from which schools was King's drawing its undergraduates anyway?

In 1955 the Kelsall Report was published. It was the first study to be made of sixth-form and university entrance, and King's awoke to the fact that 69 per cent of its entry came from the public schools. That College which had in the past been unique in admitting only those who read for honours had now allowed its academic standards to decline. In the tripos year after year King's got a

higher percentage of firsts than any other College. But the SRs argued that if this record was to be maintained, King's must recruit more schools, which were now producing a higher and higher proportion of the most intellectually alive undergraduates; and not merely the famous direct grant schools — maintained grammar schools, such as Maidstone, were also in the lead. If this was so, could the College, the SRs asked, continue to lavish its wealth on so small a number of undergraduates? Should it not expand if only to tap these new sources of talent? And did King's owe some debt, as yet unrecognized, to the rest of Cambridge? The most generous of colleges, in marked contrast to the stingy Trinity, did it not owe simply by giving money away to other colleges which launched appeals? Should not the system of university taxation be reformed and more fellowships be created in other colleges which would benefit by redistribution of wealth, for the ever-growing number of University teaching officers who had no Fellowship anywhere? And should not more be created in King's?

The Sociological Reformers were divided in their aims. Some, like many reformers, nursed the illusion that although changes would be made, the essence of what was King's would be preserved. Others were only too ready for the essence to dematerialize. The rituals of the place, or the Eton connection, or the choir and its attendant prep school made them feel uncomfortable.

Mr Wilkinson perceives that the issue which symbolized the change in opinion and provided a running debate in the 1950s and 60s was the issue of the size of the College. For the effect of all this reflection upon the relation of King's to society was to add to the numbers of excellent reasons why the College should grow larger; and this was to lead to an inexorable increase in the number of Fellows and students. Like all colleges, King's after the war had admitted more undergraduates to accommodate the returning warior. Mr Wilkinson, as a devoted member of the Green Ties, wanted the College to reduce its numbers from 300 undergraduates to 240 and to keep the number of Fellows (other than those who had retired) to no more than about sixty-five. As a moderate Reformer, I advocated before and after I became Provost a higher figure of 270 and eighty respectively. But subsequently the numbers crept up and the decision to admit women meant that the undergraduate body would increase to 355 at a time when the postgraduates numbered 150 and the Fellows not far short of 100.

Mr Wilkinson writes not only with impartiality, but with generosity, about recent years: for what occurred destroyed the College of the Green Ties. Once, when the Council had recommended that the undergraduate body should number no more than 270, an increase in that number was moved in the governing Body, I read out a letter from E. M. Forster, then a resident but voteless Honorary Fellow, which expressed Mr Wilkinson's views admirably:

The contact — particularly social contact — between the old and the young is eminently desirable for the old, and may save them from becoming too pompous and frowzy. Such contact still exists in King's, although it has been impaired for various reasons during the past ten years. It will be further impaired if we get larger. The arguments in favour of expansion are not convincing. Our "national need" is pleaded, and quite correct if one accepts the Whitehall definition of National Need. I don't. For me our need is the production of civilised individuals, and I believe that we are more likely to produce them if we stay at our present size than if we expand. The suggestion is also made that by expanding we shall demonstrate our vitality, but I think that those who make it may be confusing a college with a commercial enterprise and even with a newspaper. It seems true that a business concern must either get bigger or get out. But an institution over 500 years old may respond to other laws and have other means of proving that it is alive.

But the impersonal forces which were expanding nearly all academic

institutions, including Cambridge itself, were too strong. The social composition of the undergraduate body changed and it became less coherent and distinctive, more like that of a civic university with a highly political union; with a sizeable number of mocking moderates who observed the antics of their Fellows with detachment; and with a few who were puzzled why they were there at all. The undergraduate record of the College declined as the scholarly reputation of the High Table rose. The Fellows of King's were no longer a family. More Fellowships were created to give opportunities to young scholars outside the College. High Table rights were given to anyone who taught for the College and to an army of eminent scholars visiting Cambridge. As a result it was the rule rather than the exception to find yourself at dinner flanked by strangers on either side.

Nor was this all. King's was unique among colleges for filling a large number of places on its Council and committees with younger Fellows. This had become the custom because in the pre-1914 days, when the young Keynes and the other Young Turks had been embattled with the Bursar, they had formed a junior caucus who agreed to vote as a block to elect on to committees in the College not merely some of their own number, but those among the older Fellows whom they thought sympathetic to the cause. This practice continued over the years and had enormous advantages. Young Fellows were initiated into college business and those who ran the College were less likely to get fussy and stuck in their ways. King's was unique in being governed by people in their thirties and forties rather than in their fifties and sixties. But when many Fellows were birds of passage and more and more of those who joined the staff had not been Kingsmen, there could not be the same understanding of issues or indeed of loyalty to the institution. When I was Provost I pleaded that the Governing Body should be restricted to those who were on the staff of the College — a proposal indignantly rejected — creating two types of Fellows. There are today some interesting developments of caucuses within caucuses.

Still, no one can deny that King's remains quite unlike any other college and satisfactorily odd. Mr Wilkinson judges that it still lives up to Oscar Browning's description as a merry place which is ambitious to do something go-ahead, and cites as examples of its innovations the valuing in Victorian times of the rule to attend daily early Chapel, to allow women to attend lectures with men, to invest College funds in equities, to reconstruct the east end of the Chapel, and in each generation to find new ways of mixing undergraduates with the Fellows.

Mr Wilkinson cruelly limits himself to a bare 150 pages to outline 100 years of change; and this self-denial means that he has no space to relate the change at King's to the change in the culture of our country. He refers at one point to the College's "long tradition of radicalism", but this requires qualification. Politically the College remained dead centre. There was always a right down to the 1960s, a considerable number of Fellows and undergraduates who instinctively would have voted Conservative; King's could never be described as a socialist stronghold. Before 1914, Wedd and a handful of undergraduates including Rupert Brooke were among the earliest Fabians. (In 1888 Wedd invited Bernard Shaw to lecture in the College and the theologian Brooke Fos Westcott, imported as a professor of the Hebrew Bible, asked Wedd to ascertain what was Shaw's "moral basis". Shaw wrote one of his postcards: "You know what W's moral basis is better than I do: tell him it's that.") But the go-ahead Fellows, to use O.B.'s phrase, such as Pigou were Asquithian Liberals.

After the First World War there would have been a Conservative majority among the Fellows, and even as recently as the 1960s and 70s of the Kingsmen who were in Parliament there were more Conservative than Labour MPs, although the Labour representatives over the years — such as Hugh Dalton, Philip Noel-Baker and Peter Shore — had won higher office. King's was never

a centre for undergraduate communism. If it is true that those who wanted to register their dissent from the conventions of British society chose either homosexuality or communism, there was no doubt which choice deviant Kingsmen would make. Between the wars there were more pacifists than communists among undergraduates, though three stand out who at one time or another belonged to the Party — the historian and jazz pundit Eric Hobsbawm; the Etonian Indian politician who died in an air crash, S. M. Kumaramangalam; and Ivor Montagu, who transformed ping-pong into the world sport of table-tennis which he rightly judged would delight the urban proletariat.

Political conviction was not a habit of mind much valued. Open-mindedness was valued, not commitment. Certainly King's was not the College to go to if you wanted to seek the glittering prizes through the Cambridge Union; few and far were the politicians who descended from Westminster to dine at High Table and acquire neophytes. Missguided Oxonians used to think that King's was some sort of extension in the Fens to Balliol. They were quite wrong. King's was much less solemn than Balliol. A special distrust was attached to worldly success which lowest considered to be the hallmark of a great College.

Today, however, it is probably true that a majority of the Fellows are left of centre even if, as always, a majority of the undergraduates remain sceptical. When some ten years ago the Hall was renovated the High Table was moved. In its new position it no longer stood on a dais and was no longer High. The political significance attributed to this major statement of College policy was rightly judged to be momentous.

Culturally, King's was liberal rather than radical. The spirit of Mrs Pankhurst rather than Mrs Pankhurst inspired those who supported women's rights. In 1920, when the reactionaries voted down the proposal to admit women for degrees, there was a strong majority in King's for the proposal; and in 1948 it was the initiative of two Fellows of King's that led to the motion which at last gave Girton and Newnham the right to full college status. In pre-1914 days the free-thinkers had other concerns than anti-rationalism, and Simeon's College only rarely produced an evangelist, a revivalist or a Buchmanite. The most famous chapel in England does not inspire mystics. The middle-stump High and Dry Anglicanism of Victorian days changed only slightly in Eric Milner-White's time as Dean, when rather daringly a little incense would be ignited at the early celebration of the Eucharist.

The conventional division in the inter-war years between the hearties and the aesthetes did not have much meaning at King's. Where King's differed from some other colleges in those days was that the games players did not dominate the place and make life a nuisance for those who wanted to work or amuse themselves in other ways. There was an absence of enthusiasm for scotch, teasing the proctors and their bull-dogs, breaking up rooms and perpetuating tiresome adolescent rituals. Music not politics was the food of love. In the years after the Second World War, when the Cambridge ethos was resoundingly conservative, much influenced by Herbert Butterfield and Michael Oakeshott, some of the economists at King's may have appeared radical; but it was not until the cultural revolution of the late 1960s that that word could be truthfully applied to the College.

Some of the older generation were puzzled by a change which took place before 1950. Before then King's had been, perhaps more than most colleges, a great liberator for the boy who had been unhappy at school and who could hardly endure the asphyxiating pressures to conform to the character-building and games-playing conventions of their public schools. The tolerance and open-mindedness of King's and its easy manners were balm to the psyche. It was there that young men discovered who they were and what they wanted to do, and King's allowed them to be it and do it; and when the time came they sent their

sons there, expecting such blessings to fall upon the second generation.

The expectation was sometimes disappointed. During the 1950s undergraduates arrived better-educated, better-read, their schools had become less philistine, and their sixth-form teachers less conventional. Indeed the sort of teaching given at King's between the wars had become current in the schools. As a result, the spell cast by King's was no longer so potent and fathers hoping to relive their long-remembered sense of deliverance saw their sons unmoved by the experience. Moreover, as Mr Wilkinson notes, though reform takes far longer to take effect than its protagonists imagine, the permission given in 1882 to dons to marry had seventy years later really taken effect. No doubt the wives of Fellows entertained the young as assiduously as their bachelor predecessors. But it was never entertainment which drew undergraduates to dons. It was the willingness to give unlimited time — and now neither the dons nor indeed the undergraduates had that to give. As tutorials became more numerous and professional, and as dons became busier and their concerns diversified, King's, and indeed Cambridge, became less the great em of liberation in an adolescent's life and more another stage in education, an interlude between a year hitch-hiking to Afghanistan and becoming a post-graduate at Berkeley.

It would be intriguing were a sociologist to analyse the social class, school, subjects studied, occupation and similar characteristics of the Kingsmen of the period. Mr Wilkinson's first volume ends with some desultory appendices mostly of the early years, designed to illustrate the text rather than prefigure a social inquiry. Nor does his second volume, *Kingsmen of a Century*, attempt any such survey. Instead, it describes what contribution Kingsmen have made to life by categorizing their achievements under such headings as religion, law, scholarship, literature, music, the civil service, industry, black Africa, the Indian sub-continent, America, sport, war, mountaineering. Inevitably such a roll-call resembles Mr Wilkinson's old boys' magazine, but Mr Wilkinson's sense of humour rescues this assembly of names, offices, ranks and achievements from being too boastful. There is, of course, no reason to assume that some of those who rose to the top of their profession or calling owed anything to the College, and some would indignantly have denied that their success could in any way be attributed to a short sojourn in the courts of King's.

Indeed, the distrust of worldly values and success, or of the compromises of politics, almost certainly diminished the numbers of those who became part of the Establishment. King's was for many years a smallish college. The lists of Cabinet Ministers, civil service mandarins, High Court judges, great landowners (not to speak of property developers), bankers, industrialists, scientists, are modest. There is a sprinkling of ambassadors, not all that many medical scientists, some Quaker family businessmen, a scattering of engineers and some notably enlightened Indians and Anglo-Indians. In the world of books, music, drama, the world of letters, education, and scholarship that Kingsmen have excelled and exerted some influence.

There are of course some remarkable swans. King's may be short of bishops (why is the name of the former Suffragan Bishop of Dover omitted, well known during the war as a chaplain attached to the Brigade of Guards and particularly faithful to Dean Eric Milner-White's injunction to Kingsmen who took Holy Orders: "Abound in hospitality one to another"?). But it occasionally produces a saint. The most authentic was Sri Anandabhai Chose, who after taking a First in 1892 passed top into the Indian Civil Service but, dreading horses, refused to take the then obligatory riding test, became first a professor of English, then a Bengali nationalist and inevitably a political prisoner. While incarcerated he had a beatific vision of the Lord Krishna, founded a famous Ashram and allowed himself to be seen only twice a year; yet on his death 60,000 people filed past his bier in a few hours. He was perhaps the most revered

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Indian of his day after Gandhi and Tagore.

Then there is the nest of cryptographers in Room 40 in the Admiralty during the First World War and at Bletchley during the Second (Mr Wilkinson himself among them); Dilwyn Knox, Adeock and Frank Birch served in both places, but the greatest genius was Alan Turing, who made the cardinal discovery which solved the riddle of the Enigma machine. He was later to commit suicide rather than face charges in court of homosexual misconduct – possibly a sobering thought for those who declare how disgraceful it was for any homosexual to have been employed in intelligence work. Mr Wilkinson's second volume may not quite have the insouciant penchant for anecdote which made Monty James's *Elton and King* such agreeable reading; but it illuminates some remarkable characters who would confirm foreigners in the view that Englishmen remain eccentric and independent.

"Now, do tell me," John Betjeman asked long ago in Hall on a visit, "which is the *dimnest* college in Cambridge?" That great lover of the obscure and lowly, of the person who is both too at ease and disdainful to be on the make, and too humble to excite the interest of biographers or the world, would miss in these pages what is perhaps the most touching feature of the obituaries in the King's Annual Report – the record of those who are not much known outside their own circle yet nevertheless emerge as full of individuality and even hilarity. It is not that they do not appear in the text, because many whom the world considers dim are acclaimed in the minute territory in which, like a bird in the dawn chorus, they trill out the message that is their own. Such a man was the masterly conveyance and tax expert, Arthur Cole, who while in New York to give evidence on the Astor settlements was to be seen, a small and oddly dressed gentleman, with tie passed through a ring, seated on a public bench near Battery Point listening to his daughter read aloud Mrs Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*; he meanwhile doing embroidery. Inevitably, Mr Wilkinson has too little space often to draw more than the edge of the curtain aside. But when he does, the revelation makes one wish that he would now bring out a (fairly) uninhibited volume of reminiscence. Or that a social historian would consult the records and obituaries from which this tale has been spun.

If he were to do so he would come up against some paradoxes. The century Mr Wilkinson is studying witnessed the decline in the importance of the colleges in Cambridge. During the nineteenth century not only the University but Britain owed an incalculable debt both to Trinity, the greatest of all colleges, and to St John's, for setting new standards of scholarship through their annual elections of Fellows; and in particular for developing an incomparable tradition of mathematical and scientific research. It was Trinity's example which the King's reformers kept before their eyes, and these three colleges did much to popularize the new triposes in natural, mechanical and "moral" sciences, economics and history. Even more important, by creating a teaching staff they eventually pushed into the wings the older generation of coaches who trained the wranglers and senior classics as if they were athletes. Before 1914, in a very real sense, the colleges were the University.

But in the 1920s the last of the Royal Commissions recognized that the power must shift to the University. Scientific laboratories disappeared. Scientific research had to be organized by the University; and at Cambridge, unlike Oxford, it was recognized that not merely professors but the lecturers and demonstrators should be appointed by the University and not by the colleges. Colleges could back their fancy and pick young Fellows, but these had no guarantee of being employed by the University. The Act of 1923 compelled colleges to make their tutorial accounts self-balancing, which meant that even the richest colleges could not appoint a limitless number of dons to their teaching staff, whose emoluments in respect of their office had to be paid from fees. Once the

University began to be funded from the University Grants Committee, the colleges became an adjunct. They provided residence for the students and bachelor Fellows and, until long after the Second World War, the rooms for those in the humanities in which to teach and research – until eventually the University built departments for most of the arts faculties. Colleges continued to be founded and some would argue that they were social necessities. Or were they social conveniences?

Yet the Oxford and Cambridge colleges exercised in the first half of the century a profound effect upon British higher education and still more upon the sixth forms. Mr Wilkinson's story begins with the reformers at King's trying to create scholarships for non-Etonians. They continued to pursue this policy even when the agricultural depression of the 1870s impoverished the colleges and they imposed upon themselves a degree of self-sacrifice which no don would endure today. In 1877 every Fellow was paid £280 a year. By 1895 that figure had fallen to £80. Yet the Fellows of King's never abated the amount which they had decreed for creating open scholarships and exhibitions. At that time, too, vast sums were spent on new buildings, in order that the number of undergraduate places could be doubled. If King's was to be spoken of in the same breath as Trinity these scholarships and exhibitions were all-important: the Victorian reformers saw them as the key to meritocracy.



But the Oxford and Cambridge scholarships were far more influential than the reformers ever dreamed. They transformed the pattern of national secondary education. If anyone asks why it is that children specialize at such an early age at the humanities and drop mathematics and science (or vice versa); why the level of attainment in those specialist subjects at eighteen is so high that they are able to obtain a first degree after only three years; and why so many arts graduates are innumerate, the answer is simple. The Oxford and Cambridge scholarships were the blue ribbon of sixth-form education. Intended though they were to help the poor boy come to the university, the public schools so less than the grammar schools used the scholarship syllabuses in mathematics, classics, natural sciences, history and modern languages as the goal for those who were to read for honours. The entry qualifications, Responses or the Previous, were set deliberately low so that the pass men would not be excluded; and exemption from them could be gained by obtaining five credits in the School Certificate, an examination which could be taken by an intelligent fifteen-year-old or by the brilliant at fourteen. What after taking this exam was a boy to do? King's for long held an entrance exam which demanded a higher standard than was demanded for matriculation; but after the Second World War the scholarship examinations were used more and more as the main way of obtaining a place at a

college. They set the curriculum for the sixth form.

Of course, there were grammar schools which never expected to send a boy or girl to Oxford. Of course, the civic universities set their own certificate examinations though they were influenced by the Oxford and Cambridge boards. Of course, the Oxford colleges insisted in their scholarship syllabuses that history specialists, say, should show proficiency in Latin and modern languages; and an English essay was demanded. But everyone knew that the prizes went to those who showed outstanding merit in the specialism of their choice. Everyone also knew that the academic prestige of a school depended on how many awards it won each year at Oxford and Cambridge. I know I'd sooner win two School-house matches running than get the Balliol school "any day," said old Brooke at the School-house supper; but the headmaster's son, Matthew, as a Rugby schoolboy was sent up to compete at Oxford and got it. Eighty years later the young Cyril Connolly won the Brackenbury at Balliol and was told that the world was at his feet. But one suggested reform after another went down into the dust and sixty years later still yet another proposal, N and F examinations – designed to remedy the early specialization which the scholarship exams imposed – was rejected. The Advanced Level Certificate, which adopted the principles but not the liberality of the college scholarship examinations, was once again confirmed as the straight and narrow path, despite the existence of the Baccalaureat, Abitur, Matura or College Board.

The scholarship examinations which in the first half of the century had done so much to raise standards in the secondary schools, now affected only a fraction of those who entered a university, but the pattern which they set was imposed upon England and Wales through A Levels. Secondary education had got caught in a vice. There were too many with vested interests to welcome a change. The Government had an interest in keeping the time in which university first degrees could be taken to three years: equally the medical and legal professions did not want the qualifying period to be prolonged; the engineering profession was already declaring that three years was too short a time for the real filers; and the modern linguists had obtained an additional year for study abroad. Once let early specialization go, so the argument ran, and the standard of the first degree would plummet. A simple reform of the sixth-form curriculum would ensure that boys and girls were required to study the two international languages of our time, mathematics and English, until they went to University. But no agreement can ever be reached on simple reforms. At a time when the power of the Colleges was declining, and when scholarship examinations had lost their original purpose, their influence persisted embalmed in the secondary school curriculum. A sizeable part of the history of King's in the past hundred years is bound up with the development of the scholarship exams.

Another part of that history is more idiosyncratic. No college, perhaps, has done more to spread the gospel that to love the arts is the mark of a civilized man, and that we should translate what we learn from the arts into the way we live our life. The effect of this belief upon the history of our country – for good and for ill – is incalculable.

C. W. E. Bigsby is the editor of the recently published *Contemporary English Drama*, a collection of essays on aspects of the English theatre over the past two decades (1920-1970). The volume appears as No 19 in the established Stroud-upon-Avon Studies, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, and complements and updates a similarly titled work in the series, published in 1962. Bigsby points out in his preface that the intervening period has seen remarkable changes in the theatre, and elaborates his theme in an introductory essay, "The Language of Crisis in British Theatre". Other contributors, including Arnold P. Hinchcliffe, Guido Almansi and Ruby Cohn examine the more recent work of Osborne, Pinter and Stoppard.

The Muse à la mode

By John Bayley

VICTORIA GLENDINNING:

Edith Sitwell

Unicorn among Lions

393pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 69.95. 0 297 77801 3

Where cults and personalities are concerned there is a difference, and fashion. Fashions in outlook and terminology, like the recent ones for Structuralism and its heirs, tend to die off quickly because the exponent lack a personal style (though Barthes was an exception). Followers and fellow-travellers of a fashion disappear with it or jump on the next bus. For the couturier *La Mode n'est jamais laide*. It is its period, or helps to make it, and stays with it after time has moved on. Time, as Auden wrote, "worships language and fashion. Everyone by whom it lives" but it also has a soft spot not only for the words but the performers, the sacred monsters of style.

Edith Sitwell must be admitted to have had both style and fashion. John Press wrote, perceptively, at the time of her late fame, that from a poetry reader's background "and the circles in which he moves, one can make a pretty fair guess at his attitude to Edith Sitwell". That was so once, but perhaps not today; in our attitude towards her we no longer have to show which cultural and social party we belong to. Victoria Glendinning begins with an anecdote illustrating this. A critic, don at a party, who had asked her while she was working on, said he hoped she would at least say what a dreadful poet Edith Sitwell was. Another academic, twenty years younger, demurred, saying that he had been reading "Gold Coast Customs" and was bowled over by it.

The first critic had been an undergraduate at Cambridge with Leavis, and Leavis had written in *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) that "the Sitwells belong to the history of publicity rather than that of poetry". Himself an expert self-publicist, Leavis was of course well aware that much of the greatest poetry begins in the area of publicity, though eternally changes it into its true self. What now exists forever on the page began in what Donald Davie called "the poetry scene". The question is, does Edith Sitwell's exist as poetry, or only in the poetry scene of a bygone period? The distinction between the two is by no means clear-cut, either for Edith Sitwell or for many others, though Victoria Glendinning is a trifle disingenuous in claiming that she belongs both "to the history of poetry and the history of publicity". That does not answer the question, or refute Leavis, but it does indicate the falseness of his antithesis: for him any stick was good enough to beat the Sitwells.

I suspect that the second and younger academic, not a professional Eng Lit man, had the response to "Gold Coast Customs" that makes many readers suddenly "discover" poetry, not by reading "Lyidas" or a Shakespeare sonnet or "The Ode to a Nightingale", but through a sudden fascination with a poetic fashion scene, usually one just out of date. Fashion in this sense is self-renewing: the whole point about such poetry is that it should not seem calm, public, and eternal, but private, "local", and exciting. The modern is where you find it, as Edith Sitwell herself "found" Lovelace's "La Bella Bona Roba" (and vulgarized it with her enthusiastic patronage). I recall in this context discovering at an early age Maurice Wollman's anthology *Modern Poetry*, and relishing everything in it, equally if not indiscriminately – Monro, Aaronson, John Galsworthy (in real life as I now learn from this biography he was Terence Fytton Armstrong, a friend of Edith's) as well as "Snake", "The Hollow Men" and "From scars where kestrels hover". Also into my head entered these words:

The mauve summer rain
Is falling again

The fashion of one's age and experience is in this sense dislodgable, and its poetry as genuine as the Beatles. Indeed there is a very strong element of what used to be called "pop art" in Edith Sitwell's poetry. So far from being exquisite and upper-class-precious in her verse she in fact anticipated, and not only in her recitations of "Façade", the modern Monty Python idea of performance and the script, the poet as monster and virtuoso, and the monster and virtuoso as poet. Though she would have killed you for saying it she was an unconscious early exponent of throwaway poetry, the classless performance which draws the Russian public in hordes to hear Evtushenko and Voznesensky. The Dylan Thomas show was in alliance with her, and the poet was her friend. Teenagers in t-shirts who today read Ammons and Ashbery will certainly rediscover her. Like short skirts and art deco, she is a premier example of an imperishable vogue, the category of poetry that is simultaneously disposable and ripe for reevaluation, that is at once both fashion and style.

Victoria Glendinning is right to plunge in *medias res* on the question of how good a poet Edith Sitwell is, whether she has "importance". Not that the question is crucial to the success or failure of her biography, for important writers are not necessarily very interesting to read about. Humphrey Carpenter's recent biography of Auden was an expert and effective job but it did not reveal Auden, did not make him shine, and was graphically three-dimensional as a man. How could it, for Auden is immanent in his poetry, not in the details of how he lived. But the details of how Edith Sitwell lived are quite remarkably interesting, and revealing. That they should be and are so is itself a kind of comment on her poetry, for that poetry is not transcendent enough: our feelings about it, our reactions to it, are inevitably modified by an increase in knowledge about the kind of life that she led.

That is where this superb biography scores so heavily, for Victoria Glendinning is like a novelist: she is absorbed by monsters, their problems, their paths, their insatiable ambitions, their vulnerability, their insupportability. The reader in consequence is equally absorbed in every page she writes: perceiving among other things why it is that Proust can make us intimate with Charlus and Madame Verdurin, their passionate social and aesthetic involvements, while he leaves all dim, strange, and undisclosed the life of his true artists, Elstir, Vinteuil and Bergotte. This is an even better biography than her excellent one of Elizabeth Bowen, for that novelist, by being the kind of novelist she was, herself had turned much of the feel of her life into her art. Edith Sitwell was not capable of doing that, and would not in the least have wanted to do it. She was a genuinely strange phenomenon, locked up in herself, and needing sympathy and love to understand her, as a fictional character needs those elements in its creator.

Her poem, "The Sleeping Beauty", is the only version of the story in which the Prince never breaks into the palace to kiss the sleeper awake. Her own "Prince", the Russian painter Pavel Tchelitchew, known as Pavlik, with whom she was desperately in love for more than thirty years, was a homosexual who feared and disliked women as such: in the nature of things the kiss could never be given. Nor probably did she want it, for although not in the least a lesbian she tended to fall in love only with men who had no wish or capacity to love her physically as a woman (the painter "Chile" Guevara was such another).

Victoria Glendinning loyally calls "The Sleeping Beauty" her most beautiful poem, which does not seem to me to be the case, though it is certainly a revealing one. Her lack of passion as a poet seems an aspect both of her vulnerability and of her envy and fear of other poets, espe-

cially women poets. Living ones she blackguarded if she could not patronize. She professed great admiration for "Goblin Market", but if Christina Rossetti had been alive she would probably have received the same treatment as Anne Ridler or Charlotte Mew, the latter of whom wrote several poems more moving and memorable than any of Edith's. So, if it comes to that, did Mary Coleridge, Alice Meynell, Frances Cornford, and in our own time, Stevie Smith. And unlike "The Sleeping Beauty", "Goblin Market" has a real "inside"; it is juicy and wicked and darkly intelligent. It remains a matter of no importance whether Emily Brontë or Emily Dickinson or Christina Rossetti had lovers or experience of love with actual members of either sex. All one can say is that they knew what it was about, that they knew intensely what it is about, not as a matter of fantasy or frustration but as the crucial part of human awareness. Edith Sitwell's poetry does not know, and does not apparently want to know.

This is the odder because she certainly experienced all the pains of love where Puvik was concerned. But she was never able to get such experiences into poetry in the only way that matters: which is that the poet and his audience should discover after the poem is born that they are there, as they are in *The Waste Land* or "The Whitsun Weddings". Her poetry could not feed on boredom, grief, and deprivation, of which she certainly had more than her share. It would be idle to deprive her poetry because of what it obviously lacks, instead of inquiring into its peculiar virtues, but an emptiness of experience here is none the less deeply indicative. Victoria Glendinning shrewdly observes that she was always and at the same time both a little girl and an old woman, with the pathos and vulnerability of both ages. Her early pieces have the surprisingness, the early, and the temporary originality of a child's poetry, a child who is soon picking up tricks and whose simplicity hardens into a grim determination to be famous come what may. The poetbooks she wrote to earn money are mostly quite null, the imperious oddness in them a mere mechanical pose, but the exception is her small book on Pope. By identifying with Pope she revealed something in him – childlike, sad, and innocent – as well as drawing an attention which was rare at the time to the subtlety and decay of his sound effects. What she says of Pope is, as Victoria Glendinning points out, almost absurdly true of herself.

The naïveté and fundamental simplicity of Pope, his craving for romance, his warm heart, his genuine response to and understanding of the affections of others; these qualities are seen, side by side with a good deal of genuine silliness, a certain amount of artifice, and an intent and strained gaze fixed upon the verdict of posterity.

"Genuine silliness" is an apt phrase, though her prose style is suitably as lacking in the *mot juste* as her poetry is, and her poetry gets its effects by other means.

She wrote once to Maurice Bowra that though she knew it was a dangerous practice she let her poems write themselves at first "almost automatically". In her case this was apt to mean the indiscriminate use of poetic material, her own sort of cliché – bones, apes, tigers and lions, gold, wheat, honey and blood, the fall of the rain, the fall of man. Like another poet with no "inside", Dylan Thomas, she uses these prefabricated materials to build up an appearance of poetic majesty, but Thomas had a far more rigorous technique than she had and a great patience in working on words. On the other hand this is how popular poetry should sound: like glittering stage costumes and armour it gets its effect under strong light and a distance. "Still falls the rain" moved huge war-time audiences when the bombs were falling. It was poetry to them, liturgy, collective encouragement and comforting

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inspiration. Such an achievement was not facile or meaningless, and one understands why mandarins like Maurice Bowra and Sir Kenneth Clark, with their unexpectedly sure understanding of popular taste and popular need, should have pronounced in the war years that Edith Sitwell "was now writing the greatest poems of our time". Such style belongs to its context, and it is hardly fair to depreciate it afterwards in the cold blood of the study.

What is facile about this poetry is not its stage-design imagery and theatre scale but its capacity for carrying a "message", of whatever kind the age finds appropriate. Unexpected as it might now seem, future literary histories may link the name of Edith Sitwell with those of Mayakovsky and Neruda as exponents of popular propaganda in the poetry of the period. Edith's preoccupation with "texture", though borrowed from Robert Graves, has much in common with Mayakovsky's sound arrangements. The original 1929 ending of "Gold Coast Customs" had a theme adopted from T. S. Eliot's poetry of a few years before.

But yet if only one soul would whine
Rat-like from the lowest mud, I should
That somewhere in god's vast love it
would shine:
But even the rat-whine has guttered low.

That was appropriate for the period. But in its war-time reprints later on the ending of the poem was changed.

Yet the time will come
To the heart's dark slum
When the rich man's gold and the rich
man's wheat
Will grow in the street that the starved
may eat
And the sea of the rich will give up its
dead
And the last blood and fire from my
side will be shed.
For the fires of God go marching on.

The accent is now that of Dylan Thomas, but more important the style of his epoch: optimism replaces pessimism, evangelical fire the arid bitterness, but neither really means anything. "People will mix up poetry - and intellect!" proclaims Edith, going on to say that Keats was a great poet with no intellect. Apart from the fact that Keats is a living embodiment of poetic intelligence, her attitude shows why it does not matter what her poetry says. "Why do you like Swinburne so much?" timidly inquired an undergraduate, when the great lady was lecturing at Somerville; "I don't like him, I lack in ideas?" "If you want them," she was told, "then back to your Browning." But it is precisely the defect of her kind of non-ideological, "pure" poetry that it lends itself easily to any sentiments that seem suitable to the time.

This was comically demonstrated when she acquired a sudden post-war popularity with the far left, under the auspices of the young Australian Marxist Jack Lindsay. When Lindsay's wife read "Gold Coast Customs" at a big Hampstead gathering the Communist Party secretary, Harry Pollitt, was forced to observe that "the last line of the poem is 'the sea of the rich will give up its dead'. So it was, oddly enough, but her poetry cannot be said to give any true indication of the fact. Lindsay wrote that the figures of Cain, Dives, Lazarus and Christ, as she recurrently used them, were basic symbols of the human condition and the forms of social struggle that make up history. She was happy to agree, though real poetry cannot afford to have any truck with phrases like "the human condition". In a sense such phrases are themselves fashions, slogans of the time, and not slogans coming out of poetry and answerable only to it, as Auden's very Edith's were true to the fashion in all respects, and in its context Jack Lindsay's enthusiasm and tutelage in her late middle age was exactly like the boost she had received from Brian Howard in her early thirties, when that gregarious figure, still an Eton schoolboy, had expressed a devout admiration for her poetry, and had his admiration, as he rapturously returned when he saw her poems like the following, from "Baroque Notes":

"Old, broken-down baroque that followed
their splendour horses soundlessly,

And contained loads of young dead
pruned up in outrageous
positions.

That was his best, Edith had said, putting it into *Wheels*. The second line is indeed not bad at all, and somewhat along her own lines. It is equally true to a fashion, expressive of it, and determined by it. And yet in her young days, the days of "Jane, Jane, tall as a crane" and "When green as a river grew the barley", which so bewitched the young Allan Harper that she became Edith's friend and benefactor for life, Edith herself had been a fashion-setter. It was her misfortune that the older and more ambitious she grew the more she produced things of which the spotters of fashion and the pace-makers of ideology could merely make use, either with the patronage of flattery or in derision.

Edith was excellent at attracting the ministrations of what Evelyn Waugh's circle used to call a "jagger". The word - a friend's name - does not sound like its meaning, which is one of those kind and fairly selfless persons who are prepared to make themselves ministrant to a celebrity, who fade away tactfully when not wanted and are always ready to be helpful when they are. Victoria Glendinning points out that Byron was particularly good at acquiring jagers, of both sexes, and a talent in that direction does seem to go with the kind of artist who depends on dramas and sensations, and whose life is engrossed in them and feeds off them, as both Poe and Byron's did. Jagers are particularly useful for people who fall in love with unsuitable characters, as Edith with Pavlik, and become enmeshed in their entourage, or who suffer as she did from appalling parents. But the real prop was her former governess, Helen Rootham, with whom she shared the sleazy flat in Bayswater which for years was her only home: even there she could barely afford the rent.

Helen too became a trial, though Edith was always fiercely loyal to her. She was by no means prepared to sit in the shadow of her ambitious friend and former pupil, but was determined to be an artist herself. "One of those terrifying forceful women" reported Brian Howard to Charles Addams as the stories about it might suggest, though I rather like the one - also recounted by Anthony Powell - about Lady Ida sending the footman to ask Edith to sit with her. Edith tried to enlist for the chore her younger brother or his wife, and their equally marked lack of enthusiasm provoked the footman into protesting - "Well come on, one of you's got to go". Edith in fact was extremely kind to her mother, who in her later, even emptier years came to rely on her despised daughter increasingly for some sympathy and entertainment. The two had adjacent rooms at Renishaw, and Edith awoke one morning to hear her mother calling out, "Edith, have you ever been bird-happy?" The daughter's gift of tongues may have been handed down in some obscure way even from so unlikely a vessel as Lady Ida.

Funds were always short, and not only for Edith. She passed evenings at Renishaw sitting by the light of oil-lamps - no electricity was laid on - knitting long shapless woollen garments for herself or Helen and her brothers. Father, a fanatic teetotaler, never gave his guests anything to drink after dinner but entertained them with one of his favourite monologues like "Nottingham in the Middle Ages". No wonder that after his permanent departure for Italy large glasses of gin were frequently in evidence: Edith herself increasingly took to the bottle in later years, after the strains and stresses of her American triumph and her lionizing by English academics. She was displeased with a friend who failed to put D. Litt on the envelope after the award of her first honorary degree, and as honest piled up she liked her mail to be addressed to Dr Sitwell with three D. Litts added. Where *folle de grandeur* was concerned she was not her father's daughter for nothing. Nor did Osbert escape inhibition by the paternal incubus. In a letter to his sister-in-law Georgia, Sacherevell's wife, a letter fully worthy of Sir George himself, he counselled greater efforts and economies.

Young and old, Edith did of



"The Dancer", a bronze by Georg Kolbe, 1914: one of four striking photographs of this work, which was inspired by a performance of Nijinsky's, to be found along with other pieces of sculpture from Northern Europe, of all periods from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, in the catalogue to the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard University (151pp. Abbeville Press, 505 Park Avenue, New York 10022. 0 89659 138 7).

course suffer horribly from her parents, Sir George and Lady Ida. They, and particularly the father, attain their full monstrous status in the stately pages of Osbert's autobiography. But here again Victoria Glendinning's treatment dissolves the legend without debunking it, revealing a situation at once more complex and more commonplace. Life at Renishaw Park was not really such a mixture of P. G. Wodehouse and Charles Addams as the stories about it might suggest, though I rather like the one - also recounted by Anthony Powell - about Lady Ida sending the footman to ask Edith to sit with her.

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If it is hard to take her later work seriously this is partly because she often appears in a like an awkward little girl dressed in a queen's finery. Ivy Compton-Burnett said she had "become a mixture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Queen Elizabeth". But surely it was right to applaud, as one applauds a charade, generously if with tongue in cheek. And a child excites love, in any pose, for "to reject her poetry was to reject her". Stephen Spender was right to say in his obituary of her that "poems survive because people fall in love with them". Even when portentous ("And still falling the rain...") she could excite affection: more subtle and more spontaneous is that of one's memory for the child in the enchanted park where

The mauve summer rain
Is falling again

Competing communities

By Michael Banton

PETER RATCLIFFE:
Racism and Reaction
A Profile of Handsworth
388pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
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"Whatever injustice or imperfection exists within a society will be brought to light by the presence of a group thought of as different, and particularly so if they are visibly different." The words are those of the wisest of commentators, Philip Mason, in the thoughtful essay with which, eleven years ago, he concluded his world-wide survey of racial relations. Countries like Britain, he said, can solve the problems of the coloured minorities only by solving their own. "What is needed is a society in which inequality is minimized, seen to be necessary, and seen to be compatible with justice. This can perhaps only occur in a society with a clear common purpose."

Like those who, in *The Fable of the Bees*, foolishly cried "Good Gods, had we but Honeys!", we can too easily deplore the lack of a common purpose at national level in modern Britain and

perpetrate in the name of such a purpose. What matters just as much, as Mason recognized, is that life in industrial cities separates people from one another and does not easily bring members of different ethnic groups together in the pursuit of shared goals. The working-class communities of early industrialism are not being replaced. When individuals evaluate their position and prospects they look not just to those in their immediate neighbourhood but also to the television-screen, which celebrates the consumer society and parades the violence first of Vietnam, then Watts and Belfast, and now Toxteth. The restrictions upon resort to violence in small-scale social relations dissolve as the scale is increased, and young men who see little for which to strive find a common purpose in attacking groups who wear a different colour or the uniform of the police and the fire service.

The imperfections of contemporary British society are most evident in the inner-city areas of Victorian housing planned before the era of the motor-car and now sliced across by the lines of through traffic. It is not the physical conditions which are the roots of trouble, for there are cities in underdeveloped countries where basic amenities of clean water and sanitation are scarce yet the inhabitants live in hope.

Nor are the first-generation immigrants in inner-city neighbourhoods so dissatisfied with them. The older white residents may be bitterly resentful about the environmental decline and blame the immigrants, yet the major social imperfections are not contained within the local neighbourhood. They stem from the processes by which citizens seek groups with whom they can share a common purpose and the processes of comparison which have lifted their expectations.

The inner-city area of Birmingham with the highest concentration of New Commonwealth immigrants is Handsworth, where, in 1971, of every ten residents one was born in the West Indies and one in the Indian sub-continent. From 1974 to 1977 it was the subject of a major research project led by John Rex designed to discover whether members of the minorities were catching up with the majority in the competition for jobs, houses and schooling. When the immigrants arrive they are unable to compete on equal terms since they do not possess the same skills, but some of the differences can be speedily reduced. Some immigrants are capable of catching up with their competitors in a decade, and in any event their children should be as well placed as the majority of children in the neighbourhood schools. If they have not attained equality by this stage the most likely explanation is that of racial discrimination.

A first report on this research

appeared in a book by Professor Rex and Sally Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants in a British City*. Peter Ratcliffe, who had special responsibility for analysing the results of the large-scale survey which formed the core of the project, now seeks to an inside WC: one family in eight had no fixed bath or shower; one-twelfth of Asian owner-occupiers had no hot water in their property. There is no question that the minority members start off in the worst conditions, but the important question is whether this represents a starting-point or a trap in which the least successful get permanently caught.

Ratcliffe contends that blacks (in which he includes Asians) "may not have acquired equal bargaining rights in the (housing) market place when compared to those who ostensibly share their 'class' position". Leaving aside that strange qualification "may", what is his evidence? It is scarcely novel. West Indians have difficulty accumulating capital so they wait for council houses, but then many of them move out into houses of their own - 66 per cent in the survey area were owner-occupiers compared with 50 per cent of whites. Asians often raise the necessary capital within the family and few of them seek council houses; 82 per cent in the survey were owner-occupiers. The author's over himself to caution the reader that the houses they have purchased may be of inferior quality, or on short leases or in clearance areas, and to correct anybody who could possibly have misinterpreted David Smith's lucid presentation of the national picture in *Racial Disadvantage in Britain*. What is more important is his warning that the white population of the area is declining by mortality and by emigration; their places are likely to be taken by second-generation blacks. The area will then be even more unfavourably stereotyped and this will reinforce the disadvantages of its residents.

It is beyond question that there are trends to worry about, but where is the evidence about unequal bargaining rights? We know from other studies that in the private market minority house-purchasers have on average to pay 5 per cent more and to spend more time searching, so their bargaining position (a concept easier to understand than that of a bargaining right) is definitely weaker. But Ratcliffe does not mention them and has no comparable data of his own. Nor does he build a case with respect to the council-house sector, though among those interviewed in the survey whites who said they were on the waiting-list had apparently been waiting for a shorter period than West Indian respondents.

Are the blacks and Asians in Handsworth catching up with the whites in respect of access to good housing? Ratcliffe cannot furnish a simple answer to such a question because he is limited to discussing survey findings

In passing

On television, a sophisticated computer
Refers in passing
To "your pseudo-intellectuals"...

So much for you, Messrs So and Sol
I congratulate him on his input,
On the riches in his memory banks,
I would love to meet his translators.

Of old there were articles called
Accumulators,
Always in need of charging and topping up.
Most of the know-how they imparted
Was spent on them.

It took so long then, to accumulate.
Later, cleverness made great strides,
From O levels to Ph.D.s.
Pseudo-intellectuals were preferred to
Real dopes,
Always in need of charging and topping up.

But cybernetics is a brand new world.
Robots have seven-league boots.
Now we have real intellectuals
And pseudo-people.

O for the crystal set, virtually wireless!
And the ghost in the machine that we tickled
Into telling.

D. J. Enright

Are the blacks and Asians in Handsworth catching up with the whites in competition for the better jobs? The answer here is more clearly in the negative. It is officially agreed that unemployment among racial minority workers, particularly women, has increased at a faster rate than unemployment in general. There is some reason to suspect that when people lose their jobs, the minority workers are more ready than the whites to move down a step and take an inferior job. In the Handsworth survey two-thirds of the West Indian sample had been in their present jobs for at least five years so there was then considerable stability among those employed; a few had been able to move up to more skilled or better-paid jobs but none had obtained white-collar positions and many fewer blacks than whites had been offered internal promotion; the differences could not be explained by differences in qualifications.

One of the major routes by which a minority can catch up is by political activity, best of all by performing a balancing act between two parties which compete for their support. Blacks and Asians in Britain are in no good position to play off one party against another though their vote may well have been crucial in some constituencies. In the Handsworth survey 70 per cent of Asian men said they had voted Labour in the 1974 election and the figure for West Indian men was not far behind. The white respondents preferred the Conservatives to Labour, perhaps because many of them blamed Labour for the changed character of the neighbourhood. Whatever the second-generation black Britons will be as keen as their fathers to go to the polls is doubtful. The indications are that young blacks and Asians see their future as lying within Handsworth and in communities of their own ethnic background. At present they both, and particularly the Asians, see education as an important route for advancement, but those hopes may wither if well-qualified youngsters are not able to break through into better jobs in sufficient numbers.

There is at present a tendency to use the word "community" loosely, especially in phrases such as the "white community" and the "black community". The groups which in the past have been identified as local communities have all contained within themselves major conflicts, but the members have been forced to cooperate with one another from time to time by their shared circumstances. In places like Handsworth there are several Asian communities based upon religion and ethnic background; there is an emergent black community and only the remnants of a white community or communities. In much of their lives people look outwards to national and international affairs; local life seems drab and unworthy by comparison. Our rulers cannot now use the idea of a homogeneous nation as a way of retaining the loyalty of the less successful; they turn instead to ideas of human and civil rights as a way of formulating common purpose. It is easy to proclaim that people have some new right, but this is a useless exercise unless means are found to get others to acknowledge corresponding responsibilities. This may be impossible in a market economy unregulated by the constraints of community, but taking allocation out of the market and giving it to officials can lead to higher levels of discrimination. Present-day political rhetoric is only a concealment of the difficulties of satisfying popular expectations while we depend so much upon economic incentives.

Dr Ratcliffe's survey results are already five years old but everything that has happened since his research was conducted tends to support the conclusion that what Britain's multi-racial neighbourhoods are now doing is to bring into focus our country's most fundamental problems. They reveal the social injustices and imperfections that people in other neighbourhoods would sooner overlook.

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Disappearance and after

By Bernard Wasserstein

JACOBO TIMERMAN:
Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number
Translated by Toby Talbot
164pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£7.95.
0 297 77995 X

This is a testimony from the city of the dead – the Kafkaesque neither-world inhabited by the *desaparecidos*, the “disappeared ones” of contemporary Argentina. Their exact number is (by the very nature of the phenomenon) unknowable, but it is certain that thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, have fallen victim to this bizarre form of kidnapping by para-state, paramilitary, para-police (or a string of other para-legal) freebooters, operating under the benevolent blind eye of the military government which seized power in March 1976. Few have reappeared alive, and fewer still have dared to defy their captors by telling the tale: hence the grim significance of Jacobo Timerman's story.

Born in the Ukraine in 1923, Timerman was taken to Argentina at the age of five. From 1971 to 1977 he was editor and publisher of *La Opinión*, a liberal opposition paper which devoted special attention to issues of human rights and government illegality. Unlike the common ruck of newspapermen in Latin America, Timerman was disinclined to take refuge in the foggy euphemisms and vague allusions which define the frontiers of press freedom in much of the continent. His newspaper, as he puts it, “used

precise language to describe actual situations so that its articles were comprehensible and direct”. It was apparently for this “capital sin” that he was arrested in Buenos Aires in April 1977.

Timerman's arrest was the work of an extremist right-wing army group operating without formal legal authority, imprisoned in one of the many unofficial prisons established under the military regime, he was subjected to electric-shock torture, beatings, a variety of humiliations and lengthy interrogations. In September 1977 a military tribunal declared that there were no charges against him and that he could go free. Nevertheless he remained under house arrest by order of the military junta. Eventually, in September 1979, the Supreme Court ordered his release; the junta decided to defy the Court and arrest its members, the President of Argentina, General Videla, said that if the Court was forced to resign he too would do so. Finally, Timerman's citizenship was annulled, his goods confiscated, and he was expelled from the country after the manner of Solzhenitsyn.

The genre of prison literature often reflects the experience of imprisonment itself in its endless repetitiveness, and Timerman's account tends to stick to the sombre path beaten by his predecessors from Silvio Pellico onwards. What lends a distinctive eerie quality to his book is the manic political framework within which it is set. Timerman argues that his captors formed “the heart of Nazi operations in Argentina”, and that “an all-embracing arsenal of Nazi ideology” constituted part of the structure of the military regime, and that his gaolers seemed convinced that World War III had

broken out, that Argentina was its chosen terrain, and that they were engaged in the front-line against a world-wide leftist terrorist conspiracy. Timerman (whose own newspaper initially supported the idea of an anti-Peronist military coup designed to stamp out political violence) traces the decline of the political system, under the impact of this ideology, into an arena of ruthless warlordism.

The strange universe of extra-legal legality into which Timerman fell is illustrated by the account of an interview between Timerman and the Argentine Minister of the Interior during his period of detention.

Minister: You admitted to being a Zionist, and this point was revealed at a meeting of all the generals.

Timerman: But being a Zionist is not forbidden.

Minister: No, it isn't forbidden, but on the other hand it isn't a clear-cut issue. Besides, you admitted to it. And the generals are aware of this.

The Through the Looking-Glass logic is a piece with the sad collapse of coherent political discourse in post-Peron Argentina.

Timerman's book was accorded a tremendous response in the United States upon its publication there a few months ago, and was rapidly pressed into service by opponents of President Reagan's policy towards Latin America. The rhetoric of human rights has been replaced by a “quiet diplomacy” which claims to distinguish between “authoritarian” regimes of the right and “totalitarian” ones of the left. Washington officials in recent weeks have put it out that there have been no recorded disappearances in Argentina this

year, and that the number of political prisoners held without charge or trial has dropped from 8,000 in 1976 to 900 this year. On this basis has arisen the concept of a South Atlantic Treaty Organization which would comprise the United States, Argentina, South Africa, and other anti-communist countries. Timerman's view that “quiet diplomacy is surrender” has been cited with some effect by enemies of these and other such notions now emanating from Washington. Timerman's presence at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearings on President Reagan's nomination of Ernest W. Lefever as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs played a part in the almost unprecedented Senatorial rejection of a presidential nominee. Even in exile Timerman clearly remains a force to reckon with.

Timerman now works as a journalist in Israel. His book tells us nothing of his new life there, although it may seem a strange moment for this social democrat (converted to Socialist Zionism in his youth by emissaries of Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsair, the left-socialist Zionist party – an episode which he recalls with lyrical nostalgia) to arrive, albeit involuntarily, in Mr Begin's Israel. One wonders whether he would have chosen to go voluntarily just now, and whether his rather old-fashioned (some might say simple-minded) brand of civic virtue may not seem out of place in the new Israel. It is as a powerful first-hand testament of one who has, as it were, returned from the dead, rather than as a political analysis, that this book impresses. In its resistance to ideologies mired in paranoia Timerman's perhaps quixotic civil courage cannot fail to inspire, if not hope, at least a profound respect.

Drawing on personal experience, Kopelev is able to demonstrate not only how ruthless and brutal these policies were, but also how they disoriented, corrupted and ultimately destroyed nearly all the people caught up in them, either as instruments or victims. Particularly effective is the double focus whereby Kopelev sympathetically illuminates the thoughts, feelings and motives of the participants, while mercilessly revealing, with the benefit of hindsight, how fatally deluded they so often were, and how lethal were the results of these delusions. Nor does Kopelev spare himself in reciting his woeful litany, although it is clear that sheer honesty and generosity of spirit saved him from the worst excesses of his peers.

Unfortunately, the book is afflicted with a translation of such grotesque and egregious incompetence that only by a miracle does anything of the original survive at all. Yet readers who persist with it will find their efforts rewarded, especially in the concluding chapters, which offer yet further evidence of the human costs of this monstrous experiment that failed.

As part of their Casebook Series on European Politics and Society, Allen and Unwin have just published *The Communist Parties of Italy, France and Spain: Postwar Change and Continuity*, 325pp, £22.50, paperback, £9.95, 0 04 330033 7. Edited by Peter Lange and Maurizio Vannicelli, of the Centre for European Studies, Harvard University, the book assembles key documents relating to Western European Communist parties from 1945 onwards under five main headings: “National Roads to Socialism”, “Alliance Policy”, “The Party”, “The International Communist Movement”, and “The Parties and the International System”. As Stanley Hoffmann points out in his foreword, the documents – which include reports, newspaper articles, and speeches by Togliatti, Berlinguer and Togliatti – should help readers to arrive at an independent view of the complex evolution of Eurocommunism.

The image of authority

By Paul Johnson

RICHARD CLUTTERBUCK:
The Media and Political Violence
191pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 353 31484 0

The most disturbing aspect of the recent street violence in Britain is the extraordinary animosity shown towards the police by large numbers of young people. Still more sinister is the extent to which this trend is encouraged by Labour politicians in responsible posts, such as the Leader of the Greater London Council. The popularity of the police has always been the keystone in the arch of British stability. As Richard Clutterbuck says in his admirable new book, the police, with the possible exception of doctors, “enjoy the highest public regard of any profession in Britain”. As recently as 1975, he reports, a comprehensive three-year survey of public attitudes showed that such questions as “do you respect/trust/like the police?” and “are you satisfied with the police?” evoked “yes” responses ranging from 90 to 98 per cent. Is this approval being eroded? And, if so, who is responsible?

General Clutterbuck's book, I should point out, covers a wider field than this single topic. Yet it is the most important connecting thread in his survey of British public order during the 1970s, and it throws into sharp relief his primary concern with the part played by the media. He demonstrates, pretty convincingly I think, that certain groups in our society do have an interest in promoting hostility towards the police, and that television (though not the press) makes it much easier for them to accomplish their object.

For those seeking to destroy established society it is important to shatter the image of the police as an impartial body upholding the law in the interests of all, and to present them as a political instrument of the possessing classes. One way to do this is by modernising forms of picketing, which came into use during the 1970s. A shop-steward told Clutterbuck that he found it necessary to arouse hatred to get his members “involved in the struggle”. As he put it: “My lads regard the police as their friends. I have to convince them that they are enemies. There is nothing like a bit of violence to do that, provided that they blame the police and not me for starting it.”

The invention of the flying pickets and mass-picketing played an important part in this process. The man who popularized these two devices, and employed them most ruthlessly, was Arthur Scargill, who, as Clutterbuck shows, has also been adept at getting the media to reinforce his efforts and underline his triumphs. It is of the essence of the respect for police authority that they should be seen not merely as a moral force but as an irresistible one. In February 1972, during the miners' strike, Scargill organized a mass-picket of 15,000 which forced a timorous Chief Constable to close down Salford Depot, the Gas Board's last major stockpile of gas coke. Scargill's victory in the “battle of Salford” was a political and economic disaster for the nation, for it helped the miners to win their inflationary claim, and this was a turning-point in the hyper-inflation of the 1970s. But it was also a humiliation for the police. As Clutterbuck puts it, “The gates [of the depot] were physically closed by a senior police officer in front of the television cameras so the incident was made into a symbolic public surrender of the police to the power of the mass picket.” In the long run this aspect of the defeat may have been the most damaging to the public interest.

Of course militant picketing, as Clutterbuck demonstrates, also damages the image of trade unions in the public mind and may even defeat the object of a particular strike. He cites the case of Grunwick, in 1976-77, where the union involved, APEX, in an attempt to attract attention to its

fulfiling case, persuaded four of its sponsored MPs, including Shirley Williams and two other ministers, to appear on the picket-line in May 1977. This brought in not only the media but the militant left (including Scargill) and led to the appalling scenes of violence of June-July 1977. As a result of intensive press and television coverage, public sympathy swung to the workers who defied the pickets, and the union was humiliated. Again, during the ferocious picketing early in 1979, media exposure of union violence worked against the strikers and their political backers and accounted for the substantial size of the Tory electoral victory in May. In both cases the police emerged, in the minds of the public as a whole, with reputation enhanced.

Yet this is a risk the anti-police radicals are prepared to take provided that, by creating violent episodes, they enlist a substantial minority of activists for whom warfare with the police is almost a way of life. Moreover, the more violence, the greater the chances that individual policemen or groups of police will themselves behave violently and illegally and thus present occasions for enlisting the media in their anti-police campaign. Clutterbuck describes the successful efforts of the Socialist Workers' Party to raise the level of violence in 1977, not only at Grunwick's but in Lewisham and Ladywood, some 357 police being injured in these encounters. The SWP was likewise prominent in the 1979 Southall riot, in which ninety-seven police were hurt.

Clutterbuck also gives details of an episode in March 1976 in which the SWP, in its earlier incarnation as the International Socialists, deliberately ambushed a small force of police at West Endon and beat up a chief inspector, a sergeant and six constables. He says the editor of *Socialist Worker*, Paul Foot, and four cameramen were positioned at a nearby vantage-point to get pictures of the police counter-attacking, showing them in violence postures. The paper's presses were standing by for an all-night run to produce a special issue publicizing a rally. According to Clutterbuck: “Forty-one policemen were injured, three of them seriously. Though none of the marchers was seriously hurt, the impression given by the pictures was that of policemen attacking the marchers. Apart from Paul Foot and these four photographers, there were no other reporters or cameramen present and, whether this was by accident or design, it had the effect of ensuring that the only photographs which reached the national press were those selected by this same group.” This is by no means the only occasion when the police have been deliberately attacked, though it is usually done under cover of a planned encounter with the National Front. In August 1977 at Lewisham, where the SWP organized a counter-demonstration to an NF march, most of the fifty-six injuries inflicted on policemen occurred after the NF had left the area by special train. Again, at Ladywood two weeks later, it was the SWP who attacked the police, injuring fifty-eight of them, six of them grievously. By this political use of anti-police violence is particularly serious since it appears deliberately designed to involve young blacks in encounters with the police.

Clutterbuck's book shows that television, and especially the BBC, is far more likely to fall for anti-police propaganda than the press. Thus, after the battle in Southall in April 1979 between the extreme-left Nazi League and the police, the BBC allowed an organization called the “Southall Campaign Committee” to make an “Open Door” programme, which included a number of unsubstantiated allegations against the police. The BBC then blandly offered the police the right to reply – an “empty offer”, as Clutterbuck says, “since the police could not edit or make specific statements on a

programme on a subject which might result in criminal charges in which they would present the evidence for prosecution”.

This was merely one episode in what sometimes looks like a general vendetta against the police waged by the BBC. Eldon Griffiths, parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation, told the Commons in May 1980: “I believe we are in the presence of a concerted campaign in the fringe of politics, in the media and occasionally in this House, to denigrate the police service No organ of opinion in this country has done more to disseminate and entrench these mendacious than the BBC.” Clutterbuck does not go so far as that. But he is critical of the recent documentary and fictional presentation of the police by the BBC. Among programmes that he singles out are the series of four plays transmitted in 1978 under the title *Law and Order*. These fictions, showing the police in the worst possible light, were given documentary significance by a *Radio Times* background article, and “some viewers who switched on late were under the impression that they were watching a documentary about an actual case of wrongful conviction”.

The deliberate undermining of the reputation of the police in Britain and the violence in Ulster are connected at a number of levels, the irresponsibility of the BBC being one of them. “Between 1971 and 1979”, Clutterbuck writes, “there were six BBC television interviews with members of the Irish terrorist organizations (IRA, INLA and UVF) and many more with their legal organizations.” As he says, the public “gained nothing” from the interview with the INLA, who claimed to have murdered Airey Neave, but the *“gained”* “immense” publicity and prestige. He thinks it likely that “this publicity coup goaded the IRA into matching it by murdering Earl Mountbatten”. He asserts flatly that television interviews with terrorists or spokesmen for illegal and criminal organizations “should never be given”.

With all that we can agree. Less plausible is General Clutterbuck's remedy, which is the creation of a professional institute for the Mass Media, on the lines of similar legal and medical bodies, with a strict code of conduct and powers of expulsion. The proposal is presented abruptly and none of the many serious objections to it are discussed. In the light of Clutterbuck's own evidence, the media are only one of the various factors which tend to stimulate or aggravate violence, trade-union extremists and fringe political groups (with their publications) being rather more important. The answer therefore lies in the general field of the criminal law. It is surprising that Clutterbuck does not discuss the legal problem of what constitutes an incitement to violence or riot, which lies at the heart of the matter. Recent events suggest it is here that the law is weak, or at least inadequately enforced. “The mere presence of a television camera, as well as a broadcast, can be an incitement, and it is important that television mandarin, as well as extremist politicians and publicists of all kinds, should be made to realize that, in entering the arena of potential violence, they do so at their own great and personal peril. Nothing, I hazard, would provoke the media to deeper reflection on its responsibilities than the spectacle of the Director-General of the BBC (who is also its Editor-in-Chief) being hauled off to gaol.”

Retrospections on Social Psychology edited by Leon Festinger (297pp, Oxford University Press, £7.95, 0 19 502751 5) is a collection of ten essays on recent research into social psychology and the control of human groups. Among the topics covered are “The Role of Social Psychology in Population Control”, “The Causes of Behaviour” and “Fifty Years of Conflict”.

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Delusion and double focus

By Michael Scammell

LEV KOPELEV:
The Education of a True Believer
Translated from the Russian by Gary Kern
328pp. Wildwood House. £9.95.
0 7045 3050 3

During most of the past two decades, inquiring Western visitors to Moscow, if they were lucky, would find themselves sooner or later directed to a crowded small flat in one of the “writers' houses” on Krasno-armeyskaya, there to be greeted by Lev Zinovievich Kopelev, a barrel-chested giant with a patriarchal beard. Lev Zinovievich, or Lyova, as he is known to Russian and Western friends alike, is one of those great-hearted, bubbling conversationalists to whom hospitality is second nature, and whose generosity is exceeded only by an insatiable curiosity – about literature, about politics, about philosophy, and above all about people. Germans, Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians were all to be found conversing earnestly there in a babel of languages, leaving behind highly prized copies of *Esprit*, *Stern*, *Encounter* – whatever they had with them – to be snapped up and devoured by Lyova as soon as they had gone. Even more interesting was the fact that Lyova's was a favourite stopping-off place for visitors from out of town – Leningrad, Odessa, Novosibirsk, Minsk, Kiev – so that it was like having an instant newspaper in your hands with gossip from all over the Union. By better informed than *Pravda* or *Zvezda*, Lyova's was unlike anywhere else in Moscow, the nearest thing you could get to a Soviet salon.

A part of this popularity undoubtedly derived from the fact that Lyova was well known to be an old and trusted friend of Solzhenitsyn, a former fellow prisoner in the labour camps and the original of Lev Rubin in *The First Circle*.

Known to a smaller group was the fact that it had been Lyova and his wife Raisa who had acted as go-betweens with *Novy Mir* and had delivered the manuscript of *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to Tvardovsky. But all who met Kopelev were immediately conquered by the wit, charm and erudition of the man, a speaker of several languages, a first-rate philologist, a critic of German literature and a man of great compassion and magnanimity.

After ten years inside, Kopelev returned from the labour camps in 1955 – a year before Krushchev's secret speech. Rehabilitated, he rejoined the Communist Party, whose ideas and ideals – if not always its practice – he had continued to support throughout his imprisonment. Even after Krushchev's speech he had retained his belief in the essential correctness of most of Stalin's policies, and it was only during the 1960s and early 1970s, as he witnessed the realisation of Soviet society, that he underwent a slow and painful conversion, first back to the Leninism of his youth and finally to a position of “agnosticism” and political independence. He was expelled from the Party in 1968 and from the Writers' Union in 1977, completing his transformation into a “fully-fledged” dissident. He simultaneously lost all possibility of either working or publishing in the Soviet Union, and late last year, with heavy heart, decided to leave for a visit to Germany. Soon after their departure, he and Raisa were stripped of their Soviet citizenship and reluctantly joined the ranks of the émigrés.

Like many of his generation, Kopelev has occupied much of his time in recent years with writing his memoirs. The first volume, *To Be Preserved Forever*, dealt with his wartime service in East Prussia and his arrest and imprisonment for alleged fraternization with the enemy. His job was to conduct propaganda among the Germans in the occupied areas and he was accused of being too kind to them. Another volume, describing

his labour camp years, is at present being translated from the Russian, and the present book is an account of his childhood and youth and his early years in the Party.

Here Kopelev describes what it was like to be a child in revolutionary Kiev, the hopes and fears generated by the ebb and flow of the civil war, the euphoria, for those who believed in it, of Lenin's brave new world. Kopelev's father was an agronomist, and like most technical specialists successfully survived the transition from tsarist to revolutionary rule, though it is doubtful if he was particularly enthusiastic about the Revolution. His wife, Lev's mother, was downright hostile, as were most of her relatives and friends. Lev, however, at once embraced the new creed and threw himself, as soon as he was able, heart and soul into the struggle for a new society. Leaving school early, he became a journalist in a large factory, a Komsomol activist and eventually an avid supporter of Stalin's ascendancy, participating personally, for instance, in the policy of forced civilization. Before it was over, he moved from Kiev to Kharkov and entered the university just as the purges were starting, of which he was almost a victim. This volume ends with him there in about 1935.

The book is perhaps too breathless and fragmentary to be of much value as a guide to the early years of Soviet power – Kopelev's virtues as a conversationalist become vices in the writer. Western readers unfamiliar with the twists and turns of Soviet ideological struggles and history will find it hard to keep their bearings, and the English edition could have done with some sort of chronology. On the other hand, what the book does do is to capture something of the flux and chaos of those years, where the very incoherence of the narrative reflects the incoherence of a raw new order in the making. And its greatest interest lies in its vivid evocation of those two vital elements of full-blooded Stalinism, collectivization and the purges.

Proletarian distempers

By J. R. Vincent

DONALD C. RICHTER:
Riotous Victorians
196pp. Ohio University Press.
£8.95 (paperback, £3.40).
0 8214 0571 3

The working class in the nineteenth century played a walk-on part. That is, it walked on, it rioted, and it returned to work. It did not spend the century in an anarchistic attempt to found the Labour Party, nor even in a less anarchistic struggle against privilege. What militancy it showed was turned on and off like a tap by the vicissitudes of the trade and electoral cycles. Worse still, from the point of view of twentieth-century "democratic" historiography, proletarian distempers (to use Beatrice Webb's phrase for the General Strike) did not run on the approved progressive timelines. Popular behaviour was characterized by polymorphic irrationalism. One year the rights of the "Tichborne Claimant" might be in fashion, the next it might be the claims of the Anti-Vaccinationists. (The first government incursions into preventive medicine, over VD in garrison towns and over compulsory vaccination, both had to be abandoned in the face of a tumultuous vox populi.) One ritual, however, where popular tradition never faltered was in the matter of rioting.

Donald Richter has studied 452 disturbances in the tranquil period between 1865 and 1914. This challenges the idea that lawlessness ended soon after compulsory police forces were established by the Act of 1856. It does not, of course, mean that lawlessness became politically important. Rioting is a rather collusive, conservative activity which establishes, indeed displaces, the essential authority of government, while allowing it to make marginal concessions; the facetious phrase "ritualized pseudo-conflict" trembles on one's lips. Richter in fact concentrates on the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, and omits the late Victorian and Edwardian period, when race and anti-immigrant riots became interesting (Asquith had to ban a world heavyweight contest between a black and a white because of the disastrous effects if the black had won).

The topics treated include the Fenian terrorism of the 1860s, which involved conspiracy and terrorism rather than riot. This adds little to the standard works on Fenianism, though the daring attempt to seize Chester Castle by a coup in 1867 certainly bears retelling. As to the blowing up of Clerkenwell prison, it appears that Dublin Castle gave ex-participants of what was in the offing to Scotland Yard, who then let it happen. There is an original chapter on the riots caused by the Protestant demagogue Murphy in the

1860s, until he was killed by the Irish Catholic miners of Cumberland. The Hyde Park riots, which so distressed Matthew Arnold, are studied both in terms of official policy and of what happened on the spot. Here there was probably a greater element of collusion and pre-arrangement between Cabinet and the Reform League in connection with the demonstration of May 6, 1867, than Richter suggests; but he is right to hint that the mob which frightened the Cabinet was that to be found in the Carlton Club. The involvement of troops on three occasions in 1866-67 should be noted. There is a chapter on the Salvation Army riots of the 1880s and 1890s which breaks new ground. The West End riots of February 1886 are clearly charted, stone by stone, helmet by helmet.

More generally, there is a discussion of the growth of the "demonstration" (the term dates from the 1860s), and the restraints upon it, especially in connection with the controversy about the banning of meetings in Trafalgar Square in 1887-92. In the background to all this is a low hum of minor disturbances - food riots, election riots, industrial riots - often in rather unlikely places. Exeter, Torquay, Lyme Regis, Newton Abbot, Leamington, Salisbury, Basingstoke, Eastbourne - all these produced problems of law and order beyond the reach of ordinary police power. The Home Secretary of the period might find his "front line" anywhere, not just in the inner cities.

Can Richter's book be safely put into the hands of a young person? It is pleasantly produced, with good Victorian maps of central London, but I confess to doubts. The proof-reading is not of the best. Words like "anthracite", "authoritative", and "Michelstoun" appear. And we find Commons, without the definite article; Huntington, for Huntington; Convey, for Curry; J. L. Gavin, for Garvin; Willenhead, for (I suppose) Willenhill; an odd allusion to the High Church preferences of Harcourt, that great anti-clerical and erastian; a belief that Gathorne Hardy is hyphenated, when (despite the *DNB*) the title-page of the authorized biography shows otherwise; a reference to the Welsh borough of Dungarvan, which is in Ireland; and a quaint phrase about "the French Catholic threat" in the 1790s. He also ascribes *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* to Terence (*recte* Juvenal). A faint if unmistakable whiff of American authorship here: a point I dwell on merely to point out, esuriently, that England will soon be full of unfrocked academics who for a derisory sum will be only too glad to give a final lick of paint to American academic publishing. Our errors (for we too have them) are pardonable; theirs are not, for they could pay us to eliminate them.

The adult reader will be undisturbed by such pedantries, and will find large food for thought in the

issues raised. He will note the phenomenon of the anti-mob as particularly important. In 1848, 170,000 Special Constables enrolled in London against the Chartists; 113,000 were enlisted against the Fenians in 1867; 30,000 Londoners volunteered to support the police in 1887. These were not necessarily middle-class mobs. The entire workforce of the Manchester gasworks, the lowest of the low, enlisted against the Fenians. The authorities were always able to exploit a general inclination to see a bit of action on the streets. Likewise, the rioters were strangely apt to cheer the Guards regiments who were ostensibly standing by to cut them down, and to close banned meetings by singing "God Save the Queen". The mob was normally patriotic, peaceable, and had high standards of personal behaviour. The West End riots of 1886 were triggered by a member of the Carlton Club making an unacceptably indecorous sign to the mob below, a breach of etiquette that could not be allowed to pass without reproof.

The mob, far from challenging conventional opinion, was most active when acting to enforce it, either as pursuers in elections, or as even-handed opponents of Rome and the Salvation Army. In 1882, eighty-six Salvationists were imprisoned for provoking disorder, and 660 injured by the mob. An organization of "youths of the lowest class", the Skeleton Army, was formed to break up the Salvationists, with discreet assistance and approval from respectable quarters. The anti-Catholic riots of the period likewise can be only condemned for taking too seriously the official beliefs of society. If the Irish were not only sworn to hatred of us on earth, but condemned to perdition hereafter, what, except enthusiasm, could be wrong with the destruction of two chapels, one hall, one school, and over 110 houses in the Catholic ghetto at Ashton?

Home Secretaries and police come well out of the question of public order. The former were generally libertarian, the latter more sinned against than sinning, their worst failure being usually not being on the right spot, as in the 1886 riots when the main body of police was sent to Scotland Yard, leaving the West End free open for looting. The Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police wrote temperately in 1886, "That is one of our difficulties at all these public meetings: we are bound to show as few police as possible - it produces excitement and irritation, and directly you show police you get a bigger crowd than ever". Lord Scarman's current enthusiasm for the Kerner Report is a rediscovery of what was obvious to the Victorian bobby.

From first to last there was no legal framework for free assembly. Where free speech had a statutory basis, as in Hyde Park from 1872 and in Trafalgar Square from 1892, it

This photograph of a bronze by Gaten Adams of Sir Charles James Napier, the conqueror of Sind, is taken from Helen Smailes's Scottish Empire: Scots in pursuit of Hope and Glory (1929). Scottish National Portrait Gallery/HMSO. £3. 0 11 491743 4.

was a strictly defined and limited position of the will of the strong. Otherwise, people could exercise their lawful right of discussion, provided that not too many others disagreed too strongly with them. Riot, once again, became an instrument of consensus. Those who defied could then be treated as threats to public order. A mob forbids Murphy from lecturing; and the magistrates administered that mob law; the authorities noted, reviving for the purpose one of the most repressive anti-Jacobin laws of the 1790s. As Murphy wrote, "Those who don't like me declare that if I am allowed to lecture they will create riots." Two quite different theories of law, whose differences are normally fudged, came to the surface here, as they will always do. Does the law guarantee the right of anyone, however unpopular, to perform lawful acts (the judicial view in the Beatty case which finally made Salvation Army processions legal) even if they may cause others to act

unlawfully? or is law the seemingly arbitrary position of the will of the strong, including restraint of lawful actions if the strong demand it clamorously enough? There is much to be said, after all, for consistently crushing the weaker side; it can be done, which is no small merit. Richter's study of the Home Office dossiers shows that the authorities were sometimes libertarian, sometimes authoritarian, in their approach to individual cases, but that there was no coherent general view of free assembly and public order in their departmental outlook. From the point of view of the great British public, the right to stop other people expressing their opinions appears to have been at least as important historically as the supposed right to meet to express one's own views; and looked at in detail through the Home Office windows, the idea of a "free" late Victorian Britain becomes as dubious a piece of political folk culture as the comparable notion that the national church was Protestant.

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Saint Malachy's alumnus

By Brian Moore

MICHAEL TIERNY:
Eoin MacNeill: Scholar and Man of Action, 1867-1945
409pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £22.50
0 19 822440 0

In the late 1930s, when I was a junior day boy at Saint Malachy's College, Belfast, there was a discussion in class about the school's most distinguished ex-pupils. A senior boy put forward the name of Eoin MacNeill, saying that he was an internationally known historian, a founder of the Gaelic League, the man who conceived and brought about the formation of the Irish Volunteers, which was the main force in Ireland's struggle for independence. "Besides," the boy said, "he was from my part of the world, the Glens of Antrim." This drew a cheer, but the master at once grew bitter. "People always mention MacNeill," the master said, "but, as far as a lot of us are concerned, he's the man who countermanded the order for the Easter Rising in 1916. And don't forget he was the Free State representative on the Boundary Commission which is responsible for the mess this country is in today. The other members tricked him and he had to resign. And that finished his political life."

That night I asked my father, "What was the Boundary Commission?" He explained that it was a commission which met in 1924 to establish boundaries between Northern Ireland and the new Free State of Southern Ireland. I told him what had been said in school. My father was furious. He said Eoin MacNeill resigned because he felt unable to sign the majority report and because of that the commission, far from setting the boundaries, broke down. The next morning my father went to the school and demanded an apology. He got it.

My father had admired Eoin MacNeill ever since their schooldays at Saint Malachy's where they were members of a special "university" class which prepared clever boys for examinations at the old Royal University of Ireland. MacNeill married my father's sister and was known to me as "Uncle John". (My father himself married late in life and so Uncle John was more of an uncle.) When I was a child I often spent part of my summer holidays at his house in Dublin. I remember that he liked to break long hours in his study by coming out to work in his garden and it was during these breaks that I discovered him to be infinitely more interesting than other grown-ups, for he treated his children as his conversational equals. One day he was in Ireland in those days. He also, in some ineluctable way, communicated an impression of complete integrity and truthfulness. Later, I was to discover that this honesty, coupled with an unwillingness to doubt the word of men he counted as his friends was, perhaps, the main reason for those last lonely years in his study and garden, an ironic ending to a life which changed the fate of the Irish nation.

In the popular mythology of the events leading to the foundation of the Irish state, and particularly in biographies written about other participants, it has been found convenient to assign to Eoin MacNeill the role of the professor-intellectual, theorizing in his study and overlooking the stern inevitability of revolutionary events. It is as though in the cast of characters in this drama, starring roles have been given to those who accepted the old chimera that Ireland must see bloodshed in each generation, bloodshed essential to redeem her people. They were men for whom, as MacNeill noted in his own unpublished memoir, the nation "was not so much a thing which they should be satisfied to serve, but rather a stage upon which they might expect to play a part in the drama of heroism". MacNeill himself, a cold and realistic thinker, far from being remote from the real drift of historical events, was one of the few actors on this stage who perceived the vanity

and folly of useless bloodshed. Like Michael Collins he believed in action which would produce results, and it is revealing that Collins, a younger man who later became the most brilliant tactician of the Irish revolution, said to Hayden Talbot in 1922:

If Professor MacNeill's theory that these leaders had resolved upon the Irish people is correct, no further explanation is necessary. It is therefore not at all difficult to accept Professor MacNeill's explanation of his order countermanding the rising. Far from Professor MacNeill's being in a minority in this matter it was we who were in the minority. With the German arms at the bottom of Tralee Bay, it must have seemed an act of madness.

Perhaps this inability to recognize MacNeill's real role in the events of Easter Week was, in part, due to the fact that he was the most unassuming of men and the physical opposite of the trench-coated revolutionary of popular fancy. The man I remember from my boyhood perfectly fitted his role as Professor of early and medieval Irish history at University College, Dublin. His customary attire was a sober, rather formal suit and an old-fashioned wing-collared shirt. He puffed continually on a large pipe and, indeed, as a child I believed that the Petersen Pipe advertisements ("The Thinking Man") were modelled on him. I remember the shock of surprise which came over me when, in his pulling-shed, I came across the first dangerous weapon I had ever handled, a British Army bayonet which he used as a digging tool. I took it into his garden and in the course of an excited half hour playing solitary soldier managed to wound myself in the knee, leaving a small, but permanent scar. Even then I did not connect that lethal military object with my uncle and his former activities. I now see my failure to make the connection as paradigmatic, for many, if not most of his countrymen have failed to encompass the true facts of his extraordinary life.

Now, thirty-six years after his death, the first full-scale account of that life has been published. It was written by the late Michael Tierny, a former student of University College, Dublin, who was MacNeill's son-in-law. The author had access to all of MacNeill's papers, and, importantly, to an unpublished memoir dictated "rather half-heartedly" by MacNeill in the 1930s, after his family persuaded him that he should give his version of the controversial activities in which he was engaged for much of his life. In the memoir and in many of his published writings, as I noted in an authentic voice emerges, the voice of a historian who believed that the essence of a nation is its history, not its aspiration, or achievement, of statehood. If this cogent, meticulously researched biography inspires a re-evaluation of MacNeill's role, it will do him a service which he was curiously reluctant to perform for himself. In the memoir he consistently underplays his role in events and seems to be reluctant to claim made by others that he inspired or instigated movements such as the Gaelic League and the Irish Volunteers.

This does not surprise me. I cannot personally remember him ever speaking of his former achievements and exploits. As Dr Tierny points out for MacNeill it was the deed itself who should take the credit. But reading this book and discovering for the first time what sort of man Eoin MacNeill really was, one thinks of Emerson's remark that there is "properly no history, only biography".

MacNeill was born in Glenarm, Ulster, in 1867. His father was a Catholic, a ship's carpenter and became a "general merchant" and to play a part in the drama of heroism. MacNeill himself, a cold and realistic thinker, far from being remote from the real drift of historical events, was one of the few actors on this stage who perceived the vanity

of useless bloodshed. What would matter was not for whom Ireland was to be held, but by whom, and MacNeill perceived what was to be, inevitably, the answer. Because of "The North Began", he was approached by Bulmer Hobson of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the old physical-force party and by The O'Rahilly. They asked him if he had meant what he said and, if so, would he head such a force of Irish Volunteers? Although his agreement would jeopardize his life's work for the Gaelic League, MacNeill foresaw, as Hobson did, that a force recruited by him, a widely respected moderate, would be much larger than any which could be formed by the IRB working on its own. As his wife, my Aunt Taddie, later told me, my uncle excused himself from those in his study and went across the hall to the dining room where she sat sewing. He told her of the proposal, saying that his action would inevitably involve himself and the children and "might mean the loss of all security, imprisonment, even death". He would not go on with it without her consent. She asked him did he think it "the right thing to do", and when he answered "Yes" she said, "Then do it". And so, he became the first president of the Irish Volunteers.

It was a decision which led him into a maze of deceit, to the agonizing decisions as Chief of Staff in Easter Week, to anguish at the recklessness and treachery of men he counted as his friends, to his and his sons' arrests, to a British court martial and a sentence of life imprisonment. It led to life as a felon in Dartmoor and Lewes until his release in the amnesty of 1917, to a period of privation in his family after the loss of his university post, to night-time arrests by Black and Tans, to further imprisonment and to the horrors of the Irish

As Dr Tierny's book shows, MacNeill became the mainspring of this extraordinary movement, as editor, writer and speaker. He travelled all over the country on its behalf and because of the astonishing success of the League among the "real Irish" people he became, within a few years, one of the best-known men in the land. But he did not conceive of this potentially powerful national movement as political. "Politics were and have remained for me a secondary and subordinate matter as regards Irish nationality." In one of his more intriguing addresses he states that "Nationality is not a question of race. It stands on a higher plane. It belongs to rational and spiritual man, to the sphere of mind; and the chief thread of its continuity is the chief embodiment of mind, namely the spoken and written word". He saw the Gaelic League as a *Volksbewegung*, and wrote, "You might as well be putting wooden legs on hens", as trying to restore Irish through the schools system.

While MacNeill did not view the League as a means to political independence, it was an idea of his which set in motion the forces which ultimately resulted in the founding of the Irish Free State. In "The North Began", an article he wrote in 1913, he seized upon the notion that because the British had allowed Sir Edward Carson to form the Ulster Volunteers to hold Northern Ireland "for the Empire", they had in effect abrogated the terms of the Union. MacNeill continued: "It appears that the British Army cannot now be used to prevent the enrolment, drilling and reviewing of Volunteers in Ireland. There is nothing to prevent the other 28 counties from calling into existence citizen forces to hold Ireland for the Empire." He realized that the powerful obstacles which had hitherto made impossible the formation of an Irish national army - the Treason Felony Act and the Royal Irish Constabulary - had been deprived of their power by Carson's action. MacNeill's stablary - had been deprived of their power by Carson's action. MacNeill's further saw that this would not only

guarantee Home Rule but, make it

civil war in which his twenty-two-year-old son, Brian, was killed in a burst of machine-gun fire. "The loss of all security, imprisonment, even death", which he had foreseen, in his usual cold and realistic way, became the fabric of his daily life.

He served as minister for finance, then for industry, in the first Dáil. After his second imprisonment by the British, he was elected speaker of the second Dáil. He offered himself as Free State member on the ill-fated Boundary Commission, although he had little hope of it from the beginning and characterized it as "the most disagreeable duty I have ever undertaken". When he retired to his study afterwards, it was to do his great work on the Coligny Calendar and help found the valuable Irish Manuscripts Commission.

Those were the years in which I knew him. When I returned to Ireland in October 1945, at the war's end, it was just in time to attend his funeral. I had come from North Africa, Italy and France. Here, in neutral Ireland, it seemed that De Valera and his political foes, kneeling in prayer at my uncle's funeral, were historic figures from a dead past. I believed then, with the optimism of a generation weary of the chimera of Irish bloodshed, that our divisions would die with the deaths of these old antagonists of England. Alas, I was not. Like my Uncle John, a realist, Ireland has never lacked those who will die for her. What she lacks are men who can think clearly and coldly about the consequences of their actions. Eoin MacNeill was one of the few who could. As the late C.P. Curran wrote of him in an obituary: "To return an inverted cone to its base is effectively a revolution and that is what MacNeill did with this country and with the simple and unusual lever of radical and clear thinking."

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Splits and reactions

By Roy Foster

SEAN CRONIN:
Irish Nationalism
A History of its Roots and Ideology
391pp. Dublin: The Academy Press.
£13.60.
0 906187 34 6

The Department of Education in newly independent Ireland laid down guidelines on the teaching of modern Irish history in the following way: "The continuity of the nationalist idea from Tone to Pearse should be stressed. The events leading up to the Rising of 1916 and to the struggle that followed it will be so fresh in the minds of all teachers that there can be no difficulty in dealing with them vividly..." We live with the results of that triumphalist vision, and it is a commitment adhered to in much of Sean Cronin's book. But to say that his study is often obscuring, confusingly written, and full of glaring omissions is not to do it full justice: these disadvantages are inseparable from a fundamental unsoundness of aim, summed up in its inappropriate title and compounded by too many typographical errors (one assumes that, for instance, the description of Patrick Pearse as "a most tolerant person" is a misprint). For it is not a "history"; it is a selective study, stemming from work done for a doctorate in Political Science, and suffering from the cognate faults of recourse to pointless parallels and non-applicable "models", with passages of mosaic from Weber and Marx doing duty for exploration of evidence and facts. But the author's other life as an experienced and perceptive journalist comes to his rescue; and if the chapters of synthetic "history" are persevered with, the eventual analysis of recent and contemporary events provides much of value.

The direction Dr Cronin takes is often misleading and he frequently relies on false analogies such as Mannheim and Morgenthau. "For the purposes of this study ideology means the political ideas and outlook of Irish nationalism", we are told; and this presupposes a continuum of nationalism as "a class struggle of the peasantry, led by the Catholic middle class, against the landlords backed by English power". Not only does such an analysis beg virtually every question raised by recent scholarship about the Land War; it also raises the issue of how, and in whose interests, a middle class can lead a supposedly successful peasant war. (The other implication here is that what united the alliance was neither economics nor nationalism but religion, a question often evaded by Dr Cronin.) Similarly, his praise of Marx for forecasting in 1870 a "social revolution" over land in Ireland, linked with a rebellion against English domination, ignores the character of the social revolution that the Land War actually represented ten years later (a revolution of rising expectations among the better-off farmers). Nor is Marx's presence as striking as Cronin claims, since from the 1860s many landlords' pamphlets had been imploring Gladstone for a land purchase policy to help them out; often, indeed, incorporating a sense of angry detachment, appeals to the spirit of 1782, and citations of Count Cavour, which should surely qualify them for consideration in any comprehensive study of Irish nationalism.

This is not, however, part of Cronin's historical brief. What concerns him is to use Marx and Engels as authorities where it suits him (Marx actually managed to believe that Fenianism had a "socialistic tendency"); to mention in his introductory survey that the seventeenth-century supporters of James II used "nationality in our modern meaning"; and that O'Connell came to be for "an Irish nation-state" to begin his main commentary sharply with Wolfe Tone, avoiding earlier manifestations of colonial nationalism, and to leave out vital early nineteenth-century attempts to forge

a cultural identity through literature and antiquarianism. He also dismisses in a few lines uncomfortable figures like Standish O'Grady (described as a "Fenian Unionist" in his lifetime) and Samuel Ferguson (avatar of Protestant Repeal as well as rediscoverer of the Irish past); and he ignores completely Isaac Butt and the significance of the transition from Butt to Parnell (seen at the time as the end of any chance of an all-Ireland solution), as well as the importance of Parnell's compact with the hierarchy in the 1880s. At the outset he ignores the weight of recent research establishing just how unrepresentative the United Irishmen were, as well as the implications of recent trail-blazing work which has tried to analyse Whiteboyism and other eighteenth-century peasant movements. The stress is on a retrospectively imposed "ideology", in order to make a connection with the use of Wolfe Tone as an icon for non-sectarian nationalism, characteristic of Irish politics in the 1960s. This may be politically laudable, but is historically obscuring.

Cronin is most at home in twentieth-century politics and what his book most valuably delineates is a study of dissident Republicanism after 1921. Here there is much to appreciate: the use of Griffiths and others made of Thomas Davis, for instance, is handled with wit and insight, and though not everyone might agree that in 1921 "the IRA accomplished what the Parliamentary Party had failed to do", their case is well made. From his own political involvements, Cronin is well qualified to trace the ramifying splits and refinements of the IRA and the scholastic metaphysics of the "Second Dail" position. In this context there is a great deal of valuable and useful material in the appendices, much from the McGarrity papers, including an "ultimatum" from the IRA to Lord Halifax in 1939, and - even more engrossing - minutes of the IRA Army Council in 1938 on the bombing campaign in England. This, like some interesting first-hand evidence from Bulmer Hobson and others, is in the author's own possession. Most of all, a full and fascinating account is given of the reactions and splits set up within the Republican movement by the swing to Marxism in the 1960s - a development which seems of undoubted importance in dictating reactions among the governing classes north and south, as well as in the polarization which produced the Provisionals.

At this point in his account, Cronin convincingly introduces an international dimension missing from his earlier analysis (Pearse's blend of *revanchiste* Catholicism, mysticism, chauvinism, and a certain murky economic corporatism should surely be seen in some European context). But the "historical" background remains so sketchy as to vitiate much of what Cronin is trying to do. The twenty-one page source-list leaves out the work of Paul Bew and Sam Clark which has done so much to clarify the connections between nationalism and the Land War, as well as that of Theo Hoppen, which has confronted the great unanswered question of what happened to local and national politics between O'Connell and Parnell - a question ignored by Cronin, who takes refuge in the self-justifying rationalization that "Fenianism raised the national consciousness of the peasantry to the point where it became clear that they would be satisfied with nothing less than a social revolution that would give them the ownership of the land and a political revolution that would permit them to govern themselves." Cronin is too intelligent to endorse the full teleological line, and he also likes a paradox; but this means that some of his points (the degeneration of United Irishism into sectarianism, the inevitability of partition from the 1880s), pungently made though they are, sit oddly with the rest of his structure. Above all, the "roots" of Ulster "nationalism" are ignored, let alone its "ideology". The work of A. T. O. Stewart and David Miller is listed but not apparent; while F. S. Lyons's deceptively slight and elegant *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*

1890-1939, which so resonantly indicates the multiple national cultures in twentieth-century Ireland, is significantly absent. It may be that Cronin feels, reasonably enough, that well-meaning historians have given the Ulster Protestants' aboriginal political tradition all the rope it deserves; he may disagree for ideological reasons with many of those who try to explore its framework (as, for instance, he crisply dismisses the British and Irish Communist Organization's "two nations" theory as a manifestation of "neo-Stalinism"). But the recent work of young Marxist historians like Henry Patterson on the bases of working-class Unionism in Belfast makes Cronin's treatment of this phenomenon seem woefully inadequate. Ulster Protestants, he tells us, had no part in the Land League (a myth now exploded); they appear in the twentieth-century section as "setters of British descent"; "by 1913" we are told, "it was clear that the English Establishment would resist Home Rule by all means, including force" (my italics). Finally, "Protestant mobs" make their casual appearance; but their own implicit "nationalism" is untouched until the beginning of the last chapter. (This is another reason why the final section of the work carries more conviction and interest, as it deals with the efforts of figures like Cathal Goulding to co-opt the Protestant working class into Official IRA theory.)

To give this intractable strain more historiographical attention would divert that message laid down so unequivocally by the Department of Education - a message which, in spite of a good deal of valuable and acute comment, Cronin generally amplifies. His concluding chapter is full of sensible and intelligent comments, and follows several arguments which no sane and informed observer could dispute - notably the unproductiveness of Britain's "guarantee" to the Ulster Unionists, and the need for a cold breath of secularism, north and south. The main thrust of the book, however, bears out another message: the notion articulated in a particularly interesting testament drawn up for the author by a Republican imprisoned in the late 1950s, as was Cronin himself. Describing his initial commitment to the cause, in the mid-1950s, Sean O'Leary writes: "The viability of the nation, internationally and nationally, hinged on control by the Irish of a state building on traditional Irish values and traditions. Anybody who contested this view would be denying the deepest aspirations of the Irish people and, in doing so, would have to be treated as a rebel. Needless to say, the Unionist majority in the Six Counties immediately fell into this category." Thirty years before, George Bernard Shaw, an Irishman not quoted by Dr Cronin, wrote what might be seen as a gloss on these remarks:

There are formidable vested interests in our huge national stock of junk and bilge, glowing with the phosphorescence of romance... Nationalism must now be added to the refuse pile of superstitions. We are now citizens of the world; and the man who divides the world into elect Irishmen and reprobate foreign devils (especially Englishmen) had better live on the Blackets, where he can admire himself without much disturbance. Perhaps, after all, our late troubles were not so purposeless as they seemed. They were probably ordained to prove to us that we are no better than other people; and when Ireland is once forced to accept this stupendous new idea, goodbye to the old patriotism. We must realize that national independence is now impossible.

It would be gratifying to read a history of Irish nationalism which stressed its discontinuities, its amoebic qualities of transformation and regeneration, and which might take this passage for an epigraph. But for all Cronin's faith in EEC membership, broadening horizons, the onset of class politics, and the adoption of a secular spirit, what he really demonstrates is that such a work, like Emmet's epiphany, remains as yet unlikely to be written.

Castle Catholic

By Denis Donoghue

PATRICK SHEA:
Voices and the Sound of Drums
An Irish Autobiography
208pp. Belfast: Blackstaff Press.
£6.95 (paperback, £3.50).
0 85640 228

Patrick Shea's father, like my own, was born "on a small farm on a steep mountainside in County Kerry". At that time, about 1875, a lot of Gaelic was still spoken in Kerry, but it was not taught in the schools, so Shea grew up, like my father, fluent in Gaelic and English but literate only in English. Some members of the family emigrated to America, but Shea stayed in Ireland and, like my father, joined the Royal Irish Constabulary. He served till the RIC was disbanded, following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. At that point he went to Newry, Co. Down, and made a new career for himself as Clerk of the Petty Sessions. My father took up the option of joining the new Royal Ulster Constabulary in his RIC rank as a sergeant; he served in various towns and spent most of his later life in charge of a small police station in Warrenpoint, Co. Down. Patrick Shea attended school at the old Abbey, the Christian Brothers School in Newry, my own school twenty years later.

Although the main tradition of the Christian Brothers Schools was Nationalist, and therefore suspicious of the new Stormont Government in Belfast, Shea competed for an appointment to the Northern Ireland Civil Service in 1926, and was successful. He stayed as a civil servant till he retired on pension in 1973. His career was remarkable in at least one respect: despite the fact that he was a Roman Catholic, he eventually became Permanent Secretary to the Public Building and Works Department. Only one RC predecessor, Bonaparte Wyse, had ever risen to the rank of Permanent Secretary of a Department in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. (It was made clear to my father that, being a Roman Catholic, he should not expect to be promoted at any stage of his career: he ended as he had begun, a sergeant, on retirement in 1946.)

Mr Shea does not explain very clearly how he managed to get promotion. Admittedly, it took him nearly fifty years, and he was passed over on several occasions when, had he been a Protestant and a member of the Orange

Order, he would have secured preferment. But it is odd that, during those years, he was allowed to go so far. He was clearly a fine civil servant, intelligent and hard-working. An affable fellow, too. He was a Catholic, indeed, but there was no suggestion that he would prove difficult or disloyal. By his own account the Nationalism of the Christian Brothers boys was alien to him: in Dublin, people would have called him a Castle Catholic, meaning a Catholic who was ready to be invited, as a safe man, to official functions in Dublin Castle. In my own case, the CBS brand of Nationalism in Newry was fairly congenial. The main emphasis in the school was on Gaelic and football, Gaelic football of course. I was good at Gaelic and incompetent at football, but my problems were not ideological. It would never have occurred to me to try for a job in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Living in a police-barracks on money my father earned from Stormont was hard enough to stomach.

There are several obvious explanations for Shea's good fortune. By 1969, he had done his stint, forty-three years in which he had proved himself amenable to his seniors. Captain Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister in 1963, a decent man who thought the time was appropriate to improve the relations between Belfast and Dublin. In 1968 the protest marches began, with angry scenes between the Peoples' Democracy and the Unionists. The Northern Ireland government started putting a few token Papists into high office to suggest to the world that the bad old years of Lord Craigavon and Sir Basil Brooke were over. A Roman Catholic might now become a judge or even a permanent secretary of a department.

Mr Shea's account of his early years in the Service is extremely interesting. I am ready to believe that his masters were fine fellows: so were they all, all honourable men. It was easy for them to be fine, when every Papist knew his lowly place. Since 1968, fineness has become more difficult. Shea's last chapters are rather perfunctory. His account of "direct rule" and the closure of Stormont in 1972 is so illuminating that I wish there were more of it. In that year Shea wrote, but kept to himself, a document setting out what he regarded as the crucial issues affecting Northern Ireland at that time. He now adds only a postscript:

Black Bread

(for Ann Pasternak-Slater)

Splitting birches, spiky thicker, kinship - this is the passionate, the phonic surface I can take only on trust, like a character translated to a short story whose huge language he doesn't know. So we break black bread in the provinces and can't be certain what it is we're missing, or what sacrament this might be, the loaf wrapped in a shirt-tail like a prisoner's secret or a caked ikon, that is sour and good, and has crossed over verets, kilometres, miles. It's those journeys tholed under the salt stars, in the eager wind that starves sontries and students in their long coats. Claudius is on the phone, hear that hard accent scraping its boots on the threshold, his thick acid voice in your uncle's countenance, I'd have known better how to defend my friend. Bitter! Bitter! Bitter! the wedding-guests chant in bast sandals, the pickled cucumbers cry out in a prickly opera and round grains of coriander stud the desert crust. It's a lump of northern peat, itself alone, and kin to the black earth, to shaggy speech; I'll taste it on my tongue next year in the holy, the chosen, city of gold and parchment.

Tom Paulin

HMSO - an autumn selection

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The manuscripts and corrected proofs brought together and listed in the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* have been located in hundreds of public and private collections throughout the world. While they are largely autograph, contemporary transcripts prepared under the guidance of the authors are also included. A review of Volume 1, 1450-1500 in *The Book Collector* said: "It is hardly an exaggeration to say that no other single work has ever contributed so much to the study of the primary sources of English literature."

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Mansell

35-37 William Road, London NW1 3ER, England

The lights of the Liffey

By William Trevor

Dublin: *The People's City*
The Photographs of Nevill Johnson
1952-53

Foreword by James Plunkett
188pp. Dublin: Academy Press. £15.
0 906187 37 0

I remember a picture called "Nurses" painted by Nevill Johnson in 1953, or perhaps a little earlier. For almost thirty years I have carried this image in my mind - seven nurses gossiping, the elegance of their black-stockinged legs, their starchy uniforms against a receding landscape. Nevill Johnson is an Englishman who was then working in Ireland, one of a group of painters associated with the Victor Waddington Gallery in Dublin and with the annual Exhibition of Living Art, which had been founded to put the staid Royal Hibernian Academy in its place. The wheel has since come full circle: it is the Academy's occasional flashes of craftsmanship that today relegate Irish artistic "progressiveness" to the shadows. But no doubt, in Ireland and elsewhere, all that will sort itself out, as extremes begin again to feed off one another.

In the meantime photography is in vogue, and the coffee-tables of the well-to-do are laden with the riches of a thousand snapping shutters. The photographer - once upon a time a diffident man who kept disappearing beneath a black cloth - is now at the heart of the fashionable world. His pictures strive to find beauty in the

cult of the ugly - in the skinhead's snarl or the pathos of the punk, in the deformed and the maimed, the lunatic and the unhappy.

Ireland is generally accorded a gentler treatment, as if it has suffered enough already. Greyhound racing and cattle sales are so coyly observed that all reality is lost. Old farmers obligingly pose by a haystack or in a ditch, and you don't believe a word of it. There's an artificial wind in the hair of a girl from Ballinasally, and artificial grins in Castlebar and Skibbereen. There are artificial priests and nuns and horses and oysters, and reel and reel of dubious First Communions. Wicklow and Connemara are dressed up for the occasion in colours that have never seen the light of an Irish day. An American photographer, Daniel Kaufman, writing specifically about taking pictures in Ireland, explains how he prints blue into a landscape because "to me blue helps it look cold and lonely. I wanted the monochrome feeling to be in the print and blue also helped with that." And again: "I had the cloud colour intensified strongly in the printing. I wanted a slightly unreal look because the experience of seeing this particular sunset was extraordinary."

But now, as if to set at least part of the record straight, there are the photographs of Nevill Johnson, collected under the rather misleading title *Dublin: the People's City*. There is nothing in any of them to match the artistry of his painting, and if he was aware of this it may have inspired their dour vitality. The interiors and

the tattered Georgian doorways, the geraniums and lace-curtains, sunlight on the rags of Bath Lane, the Halfpenny Bridge, Ellis Quay, a bus-stop in the rain: all have been observed with an artist's eye that is intent upon the unvarnished truth. Everything is in modest black and white, and at no time is the camera guilty of giving itself airs.

The best of these photographs have people in them - the tired woman outside her tenement in the Coombe, the man shouting in Wine-tavern Street, the auctioneer's bell-ringer in Bachelor's Walk, the book-browsers, the knitters. It is the Dublin of the 1950s, which Johnson found a stimulating time. "The air was bright, and our hearts pumped with the promise of a new world..." The barstool supported some, others it captured, and for some the snugs were tombs. "He came to the city with an Englishman's enthusiasm, and returning today he delights in it again. 'The Coombe still has its noise and its syntax, and still its Bond Street. And the lanes - like bells and blood and trumpets the names of the lanes - Engine, Golden, Fumbally, silent now, their rafters like ribs. And on the north side, off Smithfield, Stirrup and Cuckoo Lane and Thundercut Alley.' It might seem fanciful to imagine that such enthusiasm is conveyed by the photographs, that an element has been captured of the photographer himself. I don't think it is. As a record of Dublin and Dubliners, there is a unique book, the most impressive of its kind since Kieran Hickey gathered the photographs of Robert French in *The Light of Other Days*.



"Two Shawlies", a watercolour on paper by William Conor, the Belfast painter, who was well known for his depiction of working-class life. This reproduction is taken from Conor 1881 - 1968: The Life and Work of an Ulster Artist by Judith C. Wilson, published July 30 (160pp. Blackstaff Press. £9.95.)

Benign patronage

By Jennifer Johnston

M. K. LYLE

Out of the Past: Ulster Voices Speak
338pp. New York: Vantage Press.
£4.75
0 533 04292 5

The myths surrounding Ireland's past die very hard. We Irish, as a race, staunchly refuse to view our past in the context of the world, or even Europe. Here at the very edge of the Continent we have always been, and perhaps always will be, swept along in the tide of European political and social movement. We prefer to feel that we are a special case; our sufferings have been greater than those of any other country, our struggle for identity more heroic and against greater odds.

Over the past ten years or so a

large number of writers and historians have attempted to explain the Irish - indeed it must now be narrowed down, the Ulster people - to the world and to themselves; to identify the problems and the causes of problems, disentangle myth from history. As far as I am concerned two of these books have stood out as being of exceptional value and interest: *The Narrow Ground*, by A. T. Q. Stewart, the publication of which passed almost unnoticed, but which won the Ewart Biggs Peace Prize, and *The Siege of Derry*, by Patrick McCorry. An American lady of Ulster stock has now joined those writers who have attempted to cast the light on some of the terrible controversies of Ireland. M. K. Lyle, in her book *Out of the Past: Ulster Voices Speak*, has gathered together a collection of family letters and diary entries covering the period from 1778 to 1905, attempting to give us "signposts" pointing to some fair assessment of what is truth and what is myth. What she succeeds in doing in reality is to give us a very fair picture of upper-middle-class life as it was led in the province of Ulster over that 120 years.

The problem with collecting and publishing family letters is that unless they were written by exceptionally witty and perceptive people, or by people with some unusual and controversial view of life, they tend not to hold one's interest for very long. It is hard to remain intrigued by the progress of X's toothache or the colour of Y's ball gown. The writers collected here are good, families are large. They have large houses, prosperous estates, family connections throughout the province and also in England. The children have governesses and the boys go to Public schools and then on into the Church, the army and the diplomatic service.

Their views are, as might be expected, reactionary and patronizing, whether with regard to Gladstone's attitudes towards Ireland, the various movements for change within the country itself, or further afield the opium wars and the troubled times in India. They resist what might be painful change. Their descendants

still do the same. Even the massive tragedy of the famine doesn't affect them radically in any way: the ladies form sewing co-operatives to relieve the poverty of families "on the property and in the parish"; the gentlemen form relief committees and open soup kitchens. One of the family, Thomas Scott, sensibly sent his wife and family to live in Paris for the worst of the famine years. There is a tinge of guilt in one of her letters home: "I would give all I possess if I thought I could get back to Willsboro this year, the poor Irish are in such distress, I would much rather that they got our money instead of the French for whom I have no affection." But generally the feeling is one of benign patronage.

One section of the book makes entertaining reading: the diary entries of Charles Stewart Scott, who had a more relaxed and easy-going view of life than most of his family members. He arrives in Paris in 1859 to take up a post as "temporary extra hand and unpaid attaché to the Embassy in Paris, where there was unusual stress of work owing to the tension of relations between France and Austria". He suffers from a certain lethargy with regard to work and a chronic lack of money, which makes his life complicated as he had a great eye for a pretty face and an appetite for food, drink and gambling. He is also charmingly indiscreet in his entries on the subject of diplomatic negotiations and dispatches. But otherwise *Out of the Past* does not succeed in being of more than purely family interest.

James Fairley's *Irish Whales and Whaling* (218pp. Blackstaff Press. £8.95. 0 85640 232 X) contains a detailed account of all species of whale to be found in Irish waters from "the common porpoise or herring-hog to the mighty blue whale". It also chronicles the history of whaling off Ireland from Viking times to the present day. The author has also provided a record of sightings and short histories of the Arranmore and Blackdog Whaling Companies in the early twentieth century. The book is illustrated with photographs, drawings and maps.

A Mullingar miscellany

By Charles Davidson

LEO DALY:

Titles
128pp. The Westmeath Examiner
with Albertine Kennedy. IRE7.

Titles is a collection of ephemera by Leo Daly, a Mullingar, Co Westmeath author. He refers to each piece as a "Title" rather than an essay, though all save one are essays in form. Every one is accompanied by an introduction by the author and a foreword (and in one case an epilogue) by another hand. This alone would make it an unusual piece of book making; the effect is increased by the wayward use of footnotes, sometimes on a different page from that of the text they elucidate, and sometimes having a page to themselves. Odd, too, is the manner of the book's illustration: the pictures are numerous, but in some cases appear to have no connection with the text.

Does the matter live up to the manner? It too is curious, with a diversity that prompted the description "ephemera", although this may prove too strong a term. The first of the five "titles" is a learned essay on the references, direct or oblique, to Joyce in the works of James Joyce, where they are always frequent and, in *Finnegans Wake*, "diversified to an extraordinary degree". Joyce used to celebrate St Patrick's Day with a plum pudding and it is a pity that no slice of it has been preserved (with Wolfe Tone's biscuit and Lady Gregory's barm brack), but Mr Daly gives us a good sprinkling of patrician curriants. His national saint seems to have stood close enough to Joyce's elbow, doubtless with his eyes modestly averted from the manuscript.

The second piece, "The Jealous Wall" is an account of the married life of Robert Rochford, first Earl of Belvedere, an eighteenth-century domestic tyrant who kept his wife under house arrest for eighteen years on suspicion of her adultery with his brother Arthur. She escaped

once but was brought back and no one tried to rescue her until the second earl freed her upon the death of his father. Belvedere also quarrelled with his brother George, and built the "Jealous wall", a Gothic folly, to screen the view of Rochford, George's house, from his own, Belvedere (the latter survives, with notable gardens). This extraordinary man flourished during his lifetime - there is no moral to the tale - and subsequently was one of the inspirations for Sir Kilt Stoppag in Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*. Belvedere was the son of one Prince Rochford; clearly it was an iron that had entered his soul.

The third title consists of a series of extracts from Dr George Cheyne's *Treatise on Health* published by William Kidd of the *Westmeath Journal* in Mullingar in 1787. Mr Daly interpolates his own comments in the form of facetious platitudes. He then returns to the essay form in "The life and opinions of Adolphus Cooke", the story of an eccentric landlord of Co Westmeath who lived from 1792 to 1876. Cooke was much odder than Belvedere and many instances of this oddness are given, but the stranger the tale, the more pedestrian becomes Mr Daly's prose, of which the following are fair samples: "Although no punster himself, Cooke could enjoy a joke, but was very sensitive about some things"; "it is interesting to speculate upon the origin of the story"; "however, the sting was in the tail". This lack of feeling for good writing continues into the next title, concerning the novelist Bulwer Lytton and his Irish wife Rosina, described as "beautiful, tempestuous, talented, and endowed with a saucy Irish charm, she is a mature yet tender blossom ready for plucking by the literary rampaging wolves of the time". It is not easy to imagine a wolf plucking a tempestuous blossom, although perhaps an Irish bull might do so. This title is made up of extracts from the Lyttons' correspondence (source unacknowledged) and has the appearance of a makeweight.

A slight enough volume, in all conscience, but it is cheap, well produced, and endowed with a saucy Irish charm.

Vagrant stories

By Patricia Craig

FRANK O'CONNOR:

The Cornet-Player Who Betrayed Ireland
238pp. Dublin: Poolbeg Press. £7.50.
0 905169 37 9

Of the 200-odd stories which Frank O'Connor wrote, forty or so remained uncollected, for various reasons (he intended to make a further draft, perhaps, or the story broke the pattern established in the volume to which it would have been assigned). Now, fifteen years after O'Connor's death, twenty-one of these vagrant pieces have been brought together to form a new collection.

The earliest story in *The Cornet-Player Who Betrayed Ireland* goes back to 1926; the latest - "The Grip of the Geriatrics" - is the one O'Connor was working on when he died. What's immediately striking about all of them is a kind of narrative vigour and flamboyance; no more than two or three are downcast and restrained, and even these have wrought-up moments. "There is a Lone House", for instance (one of O'Connor's best), about an outcast woman with a dark episode in her past, and a roving drunkard, gains dramatic interest from the sudden explosions of feeling which disrupt its somnolence. "The Miracle", which begins gloomily enough with nuns on a wet morning looking out "on the lenten greyness of their fields", deals with an extravagant piece of hoodwinking and ends on a moderately wry note - "you couldn't expect to get used to miracles after you reached the age of seventy". The title story's exuberance is tempered with ruefulness: it presents a child's view of a farm-fighting, and the sorry predicament of a cornet-player tormented by opposing loyalties - to the band, and to his political leader.

It is a characteristic device of O'Connor's to avoid emotional intensity by keeping his characters at a proper distance; he is the anecdotalist, not the analyst, of strong feelings. He catches the overflow of passions in fluent lamentations and imprecations which are part of the rumbustious Irishness he set out to depict. It is all a performance, put on with a saving element of droolery. The canny, the bombastic and the disputatious: these are all here, each displaying his central trait to the full. If O'Connor sometimes pushes his characters to the brink of sentimentality, he rarely lets them topple over; a brisk retraction, or a cynical aside, is inserted at the last moment. Playfulness, verve and cunning are the narrator's attributes.

The benign mockery and unambitious criticism of Irish life, which charmed O'Connor's earliest readers, have come under attack in recent years from those who require from their fiction a sharper exposure of national ills, an oblique angle of vision or an undercurrent of ferocious discontent. It is true that O'Connor's habit is to poke fun at church dignitaries, for example, without repudiating too strongly the ethics of Catholicism. He is not in the grip of a lacerating satirical impulse, as Flann O'Brien was; both his comedy and his social commentaries are less dense and subtle than Sean O'Faolain's. But it should be remembered that he broke with tradition - the tradition of romantic republicanism, at any rate - by re-creating with great clarity and dispassion his own experiences in the Irish civil war (his first collection, *Guests of the Nation*, which dealt with this theme, came out in 1931).

A couple of war stories (the gauche and the timorous caught up in nightmarish soldiering) have been found for the new collection; and also several concerning fierce, vehement, ragamuffin children. O'Connor, as always, adds a comic savour to the commonplace; in "The Climber", a little girl who is first captivated, then repelled, by respectability, you are invited to relish the child's devastating candour and innocent posturing.

cent posturing:

... More than ever she wanted to be respectable. She refused to go out with the other children; she stole Jackie's new cap from the drawer where Mrs Geney kept it, wrapped in its original tissue, and led him out by the hand.

"Now, will you keep on raising your cap," she said. "I don't know what sort of way you were dragged up at all, but you should always raise your cap to a lady.... Here's Mrs Dunphy along now. Raise your cap to her, you little cuffer."

We know that this episode will end with a glorious return to unrestraint. It's significant that there are no significant females in these stories over the age of ten or twelve. "Lumps of girls" there are, and, recognising wives, but none whose experiences are crucial to the theme. The natural condition of O'Connor's men is bachelorhood, though many are married; they surround themselves with garrulous cronies and palaverers whose trick is to strike attitudes in a public bar. Courtship is conducted as a farcical campaign. We recognise again the justice of Elizabeth Bowen's remark about the sexlessness of standard Irish fiction (to find it borne out in the work of Frank O'Connor, author of many felicitous translations of mildly erotic Gaelic verse).

The weakest of the rediscovered stories - "A Case of Conscience", "Hughie", "The Adventurers" - are those which suffer from insufficient twang, making the storyteller seem less than wholehearted about his undertaking. The oddest piece is "May Night", with its fearsome hints of J. M. Synge. O'Connor keeps his feet on the ground: no airy romancing or visions that-came-by-the-left-hand here (the "Ghosts" in the story of that title are products of nostalgia, not psychic forces). But his characters' outrageous generalizations are always entertaining - on the subject of hypocrisy, for example: "The English, with their walled cities, their castles, their artillery, as the price of their hypocrisy; all the unfortunate gulls of Irishmen ever got out of their self-deception with a ragged cloak and a bed in a wood." Honesty of expression, rather than realism, is O'Connor's objective, and this he achieves in an impressive number of stories. And always, his craftsmanship is unflattering and his showmanship assured.

Criminal proceedings

MARGARET YORKS:

The Hand of Death
218pp. Hutchinson. £6.50.
0 09 145140 X

Insignificant country antique dealer with a secret passion for pornography gradually gets hooked on the real thing, turning to rape and then murder. Very English story, in its creation of a number of convincing, very detailed, domestic scenes, "fashioned", too, in its use only of invented place-names. But well-written and satisfyingly put together.

J. C. S. SMITH:

Jacoby's First Class
188pp. Hale. £5.95.
0 7091 9005 0

Jacoby, a former transit cop, has spent his working life underground on the New York subway. Now retired, he divides his time between track and television, but succumbs to a teenager's pathetic plea and sets out to look for a girl who has disappeared. And uncovers a very nasty can of worms. The story is better on setting and atmosphere than plot, but it is interesting and above all unpretentious: Jacoby should be good for a few more cases before that final retirement.

T. J. Binyon

BASIL BLACKWELL

Brecht

JAN NEEDLE and PETER THOMSON

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commentary

Purgatorial pratfalls

By Peter Conrad

Don Giovanni
Covent Garden

Il Barbiere di Siviglia
Glyndebourne

Covent Garden's new *Don Giovanni* is unable to decide whether to be a tragedy of spiritual perdition or a snatch-and-grab comedy of erotic intrigue. The work itself, of course, is both, its characters simultaneously tragic and comic - tragic if their own misdeeds account of their pain and distress are attended to, comic once this self-estimation is compromised by the upsurges of sexual need or their dramatic entanglements with others. The director's duty is to ensure that the twin perspectives complement each other rather than clashing, which Peter Wood at Covent Garden hasn't managed to do.

He begins impressively. When Colin Davis funnery intones those chords which are an announcement of death, the curtain parts on an apocalyptic scrim which flushes red as the damned tumble through space, their flesh clawed by the talons of horned birds. This purgatorial gauze rolls away to reveal a palace for the Commendatore which is already - in advance of his death - a baroque bonanza, with tiers of calced ancestors witnessing the attempted rape of Donna Anna. The costumes are red and black, the tonalities of blood and hell. For his last supper, Giovanni slinks into a pair of thigh-high crimson boots, which make him look as if he's wading in flame. The light throughout is a lurid sunset, until - when the statue claims Giovanni and sentences sensuality to a petrified, unfeeling death - Will Dudley's skeletal Palladian amphitheatre glows green, the phosphorescent colour of decay. These mildewed galleries with their ranks of stone judges stand for the libertine's anarchic effort to escape from the constricting circle of society, and his eventual imprisonment within it and within the concentric circles of hell. The semi-circles split asunder when, at his vinous orgy for the peasants, Giovanni announces "Viva la libertà!" and forces the avenging maskers to join him in the choral praise of a liberality and libertinism they have promised to exterminate; they snap shut when the statue condemns him. Anna in her first scene drags closed the clanking gates and locks them to trap her assailant. Now, as the semi-circles unite, she and Ottavio ride triumphantly on an upper tide, and Giovanni is gaoled in a huts class of dry ice.

During the second act, the mausoleum the Commendatore inhabits turns into a cathedral, haunted by two dark angels - Elvira, the troubled angel of mercy and desire, and Anna, the punitive angel of death. Elvira sings "Mi tradi" beneath a baroque altarpiece of the crucifixion. Loscy in his film made her whisper this aria into a confessional; can it be Peter Wood's intention to ally her with the self-sacrificing intercessor before whose image she is placed? And if so, why does she revile and abuse him after her next effort to save him, and hurl in his face the wine with which he is toasting promiscuity? Or is the altar after all not an item in a thought-through interpretation but just an empty-headed eye-catcher?

With Anna, too, there's an inconsistency in presentation. After the assault, she moves pallidly, half-alive on Ottavio's arm, already a member of that moribund gallery which contains her father's image. Her comment to Ottavio when she recognizes Giovanni as her ravisher is "son morta"; she has retired into a deathly regime of penance and self-castigation. For the second section of "Non mi di", the apocalyptic scrim returns as her personal backdrop. Her aria here is a plea for heavenly

clemency and for relief from her trials; but the scrim represents not heaven's pity for her but its furious persecution of Giovanni. Is this irony or only coherence? As with Elvira's altar, I suspect it's scenic exigency. A camouflage is needed to conceal the rearrangement of the set, so the Last Judgement is conveniently unfurled, and the Anna of Gundula Janowitz is pushed downstage and encouraged to deliver self-interrogation as a sparkly concert aria.

Until stranded during "Non mi di" and permitted to regress from a character into a vocal soloist, Janowitz's Anna is superb, singing with a perfectionism which fits the character's cold rage. The vocal contrast between her unerring focus of tone and the generous vibrato of Kiri Te Kanawa's Elvira is well-judged; the women are competing musical as well as sexual archetypes, the one aiming her voice with lethal accuracy and unwavering purity, the other pouring it out with reckless fervour. But in Kiri Te Kanawa's performance Wood's production topples from tragedy into sizzling farce. She rambles on as a temptress, a demi-mondaine who bosses her baggage train, tears off her hat, and slouches on a suitcase managing her ageing legs. When Giovanni surprises her, her reaction is man-eating frenzy. She squeals and squeals her recitative in his arms, scratching and punching him in a fit of aggrieved lust. This is an Elvira whose comic exuberance impugns her alternative tragic aspect, and confounds Wood's promotion of her, in "Mi tradi", to a sacrificial sufferer.

Ruggero Raimondi's Giovanni mostly avoids leering comedy. His relationship with Leporello is one of menace and antagonism, not scamy complicity. There's a threatening malevolence to Raimondi's dark voice, and his saturnine shout of "Meglio ancora!" in the crypt, when his enjoyment of a scabrous practical joke incites the statue's intervention, is a great moment of vocal defiance: the hubris of the human voice is answered by a voice which is an echo from beyond the grave, leaving Giovanni to ponder its meaning in a reverberant silence. But Raimondi too at the end forfeits his tragic status and is comically deflated by being made to tumble to his death down a curving staircase. The figures on the initial scrim hurdle and revolve through bottomless space; Giovanni's death translates their torment into a pratfall. The spiritual rebel shrinks to a gymnastic corsair played by Douglas Fairbanks or Errol Flynn.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia is Rossini's opus magnum rather than *Le Nozze di Figaro*, since its subject is appetitive rebellion, the gustatory licence which is the energy of romanticism. Leigh Hunt thought Giovanni a jocular embodiment of "animal ardour and... remorseless enjoyment", no longer rapacious but safely playful and frisky. Hazlitt too luxuriated in Mozart's opera as a "scintillating idyll, redolent of the intoxication of pleasure, the sunshine of hope, the dancing of the animal spirits". The motive of Mozart's hero, to these interpreters, is sensuous delectation not sexual compulsion. Rescued from tragedy, Mozart's Don Giovanni has turned into Byron's Don Juan. In music the same metamorphosis is accomplished by Rossini, whose people are (as Keats said) lifted with the cravings of appetite) nourished by food which they create in "dreaming" of it. His libertines are, but have relaxed into a cosy, glutinous benevolence.

Leigh Hunt accordingly preferred the Giovanni of the burlesque, plays to the Mozartian character, since he'd been purged of predatory will and become a Keatsian nursing or

like Rossini's Almaviva, Figaro and Rosina - a symbol of "the eternally renovated youth and fair play of nature", biologically contending with desiccated elders like Bartolo and Basilio. The singing voice is the instrument aptest to this rebellious wailing in "Una voce poco fa", it's a voice which has awakened her "like a voice which has awakened her", and made her desire release from her captivity, and she used her own voice with what Hazlitt and Hunt would have seen as the animal's voluptuous delight in its own aliveness. Her excursions into a husky lower register are a warning of the passion beneath her polite docility, her top notes are her gestures towards a flighty freedom. Singing Rossini is the tongue-twisting articulation of more or less nonsensical synonyms for joy: Figaro's exultant "l'alalalalalalalalal", the gurgles and bleats of erotic anticipation in Almaviva's serenade. Glyndebourne has two excellent examples of this comic vitalism in the plump self-contented Figaro of John Ravensley and the antic Almaviva of Max-René Cosotti.

For these people, music - which in the overture to *Don Giovanni* is a force of elemental and demonic urgency - has settled down into a culinary pleasure, summoned into being by a whim or a natural hunger. In John Cox's fine new production at Glyndebourne, Almaviva strikes the harpsichord for the singing lesson and the orchestra, not the keyboard, obediently begins to play; likewise Basilio the music master takes over the conducting of the orchestra during the crescendo of his calumny aria. Kierkegaard said that Don Giovanni was an exclusively musical character because his sensual avidity dismisses the mediation of words. Music's genius is its immodesty: the libertine's desires are translated at once into actuality by the orchestra, just as Keats's poet makes his dream a truth by wishing it to be so. Rossini's Figaro inherits this hedonistic musical impatience from Giovanni. He insists on music's ravenous present tense, chiding Rosina and Almaviva because they lag behind for some private spooning and won't join in the faster tempo he sets for their escape. Figaro is essential to Kierkegaard's interpretation - he's a supplier of instant gratifications. During the first aria John Cox has him collect and deliver letters (pocketing a fee for postage) and supply lovers with songs from a capacious inside pocket; his shop flutters down from the flies at his command, and inside it, while keeping up his musical patter, he measures Almaviva for

the disguises he rents to him.

Cox's production, set in an arboreal, touristic Seville designed by William Dudley, abounds in images of that satiated stupor which is Rossini's luxurious and indolent version of Don Giovanni's sensual panic. One of the musicians hired by Almaviva dozes under his sombrero; Bartolo nods off over his port; the chief officer saunters in dragging on a cigar. This voluptuous prostration infuriates Rosina, who shocks Figaro by telling him that she's dying of boredom in her prison. The characters, as Byron said of Keats, are self-soliciting. They administer pleasures to themselves and rely - like Rossini himself, whose celebrated laziness was a condition both of invalidism and of almost mystical delirium, withdrawn from the tribulations and anxieties of active life - on artificial stimulants to shock themselves back to life. Cox has Bartolo revive himself with a pill so that he can sing the peroration of "un Dottor della mia sorte"; Berta relies on infusions of tobacco, which has afflicted her with her chronic sneeze; Almaviva, as the riotous soldier, reels in swigging from a flagon of red wine.

This animation is the scurrying pulse of Rossini's score, and the climaxes of dramatic action occur when the characters are momentarily paralysed, metaphorically killed. One such comic death is the diagnosing of Basilio's scurled fever; another is the statifying of Bartolo at the end of the first act. He's so taken aback, the others mutter, that he resembles a statue; is this Rossini's homage to *Don Giovanni* and its tragic petition of sensuality, when the Commendatore turns flesh to clammy stone? Cox has contrived a repeat of this paralysed, mortified tableau in the second act when Bartolo again is stultified, trussed up in the barber's chair while the lovers mock him. *Il Barbiere* is by no means mindlessly blithe. It's about the pleasures of sense, and also about the unfortunate necessity of having to pay for his necessities. Almaviva is required to tip the street musicians and to bribe Basilio, and Figaro punctiliously demands a bonus from him before beginning the final ensemble. It contains the resilient sprightliness of life, but also - in Berta's wonderful lament, sung at Glyndebourne with the right degree of desperation and outrage by Catherine McCord - admits its inevitable sagging into elderly debility. Don Giovanni suffers damnation, but all the people in Rossini's comic world have their own equivalent of his spiritual plight: the libertine's misery of jaded exhaustion, the glutted expiry of the capacity to feel.

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DUCKWORTH

The Old Piano Factory
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commentary

Trouble reconstituting

By Hugo Williams

Altered States
Warner West End Cinema

I like a man with dedication. In Ken Russell's new film *Altered States*, Dr Jessup is so devoted to his work as a physiologist that he personally regresses through a baboon and an amoeba to his own unborn soul in the shape of God's original laser beam. A man can hardly do more than that in the service of science. Dr Quatermass, with his puny National Health Service research grant, could barely get beyond having his arm turn into a narrow.

Just what type of research Dr Jessup is doing isn't clear. The one time he tries to explain, he has his mouth full and is incoherent, though this is perhaps a faithful enough interpretation of a script by Paddy Chayefsky (*The Hospital*, *Network*), who happens to think with his brain full.

Part of the research seems to involve the doctor in suspending himself in a sensory-deprivation tank while brooding on the death of his father. Before long he becomes "flaky" and his marriage cracks up. "For God's sake, Jim, what are you thinking about?" asks his wife as he climaxes strangely. "Crucifixes", admits the doctor. So off he goes to Mexico in search of drugs. Cut to an everyday Mexican scene of white-bearded mushroom-gatherers dressed as druids, picturesque topped with statues of giant fungi. What luck:

they're partying tonight! "You will see a crack in the nothing and out of this nothing will come your unborn soul", says a druid. Russell takes him literally. One sip of the brew and the special effects boys throw caution into a psychedelic whirlpool. Lasers smack across the screen like Kawasaki ads. Sparks fall from the ceiling. (This drug is too noisy.) The crack appears and out of it comes Mrs Jessup, who turns into a goat with eyes all over its face. This goat is also the head of Christ on a cross which flies right down someone's throat, as in *Performance*. Now Mrs Jessup turns into a lizard and is killed by her husband, who turns to sand and is blown away by the winds of time.

Not satisfied with this lot, Jessup scores the left-over drugs and takes them back to Harvard. He drops some more and jumps right back in the tank. "Tiny furry humanoid creatures, stalking or hunting... I'm becoming one of them... I'm killing the goat... beautiful... beautiful (*barra*)". Obviously the doctor was impressed with his holiday. When he comes out he has even blood on his mouth and himself has the skeleton of a gorilla (herbivores, surely). "Some of these tank trips can get pretty creepy" observes an alert lab assistant. "The drug triggers the externalization of a more primitive state" explains the doctor. "X-ray me before I reconstitute."

In bed with a student, he finds the ape in him re-externalizing, forearms and chest bulging around a *Leucis*, and staggers for the shower. "You O.K. in there Dr Jessup?" calls the student. "I'm fine" grunts Mr Hype, staring at hairy wet ape-feet. "Just want to make a few notes..." It isn't long before he is screaming naked and furred through Boston zoo in search of good food, deeply shocking, no doubt, to born-again Americans zapped on the LP of Genesis, but I haven't laughed so much since *Apocalypse Now*. "For God's sake, Jim, give up this nonsense before you do yourself some permanent genetic damage" says his wife, voicing my own fears for Russell. But no, he won't listen to reason, swigs the last of the stuff and jumps in the tank.

Here's where the film finally boils over and puts out its own meagre gas-flame. If Russell could have ordered the thirteenth plague of Israel into the studio he would have done so. Steam shoots from a pipe. The ceiling undulates. Lasers and synthesizers blister the paintwork. White heat has sealed shut the tank, which has become transparent. Inside pulses an eye or something. What more can they do to make us realize that "whatever's going on in there's releasing a fucking lot of energy"? Well, why not have the entire lab turn into a whirlpool of milk? Indicates primal flux etc, metaphysical of course. Can dol And why not have the girl climb back through the shattered control window and start wading about in an attempt - seems hopeless. I know - to rescue her "love" from the binary continuum? Nice thinking! But hang on a second: if this is the imploding universe, how come she's only knee deep in it? Philistine! The important thing is she's *there*, fighting. She puts her hand down into the milk, or the flux, or the creation, gets hold of her husband, or the eye, or the truth, and pulls it back into the physical world, or the Love Story, or a flooded film studio, and that's it: a tremendous achievement. "I love you, Emily" says the doctor at last, and we see just how much this means to Emily as the film fades to a final nude embrace.

Unfortunately, Russell hasn't been able to perform a similar rabbit-from-hat trick on the film, which he apparently took over from Arthur Penn. My daughter said it must have been made at least ten years ago because of the lightshows and flared jeans. In fact, flared trousers are now as essential to this kind of science-fance as frock coats are to Dracula movies, conferring as they do an atmosphere of kitsch and a licence to go as "far-out" as you like, without ever having to "reconstitute".



"La Femme au Fauneuil" (1956), from the exhibition Fernand Léger, 1881-1955, opening at the Riverside Studios on August 1.

Frisky juveniles

By Nicholas Shrimpton

A Midsummer Night's Dream
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford

After the Penny Plain of the 1960s, the Royal Shakespeare Company has gradually been turning Twopenny Coloured. The Theatre of Cruelty gave way to *commedia dell'arte*, empty spaces to crowded chambers, ferocity to fantasy and fun. The change continues apace. If it is no thing else, a Stratford production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the style of the Victorian "Juvenile Drama" is a milestone in this long march through the dramatic conventions.

The door of Ron Daniel's theatrical toyshop opens onto a scene straight from Pollocks. The Brook white box could hardly be further from us. Swags of canvas cloud hang stiffly in the heavens. Flats and cut-out wings present a palace of Theseus in the highest Victorian taste. To the tinkling music of an off-stage piano, Hippolyta enters in a crinoline, escorted by Theseus as Colonel of the Ruritanian Imperial Guard. All is decorum and drawing-room manners. The Duke reclines on a chaise-longue to receive his troublesome deputation, and admonishes Hermia in the clipped tones of a premature Noel Coward.

Mutton-chop whiskers and frock-coats do not, of course, make this a Victorian production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Victorians themselves were acutely conscious of the ancient and Athenian setting of the play, and certainly never attempted what to them would have been modern-dress staging. When Tyrone Guthrie directed his pastiche of a Victorian *Dream*, at the Old Vic in 1937, he put his fairies in ballet tunics, and revived the Mendelssohn score. Daniels does none of those things. Instead he hides a conventionally rumbustious mid-twentieth century production behind a thin Victorian veneer.

The effect is bright and jolly, and the toy-theatre manner sometimes helps to conceal the stiffness of Shakespeare's construction. But the superficiality of the conception prompts an unworthy suspicion. With a Victorian smash-hit on its hands in *Nicholas Nickleby*, is the RSC suffering from stylistic cross-infection? Does everybody, at least when handling comedy, suddenly want to inhabit the 1830s? Certainly it is hard to find any very profound intention behind the choice of dress. The fairies are plastic dolls (seemingly inspired by Peter Blake's paintings), manipulated by actors in proletarian clothes from the pages of Mayhew. If a point is being made about the class structure, however, it remains obscure. Peter Brook uncovered social implications far more effectively by the simple device of casting as the mechanicals actors who actually looked like tinkers, tailors and carpenters.

Elsewhere the Victorian reference seems straightforwardly decorative. The hunting scene looks more convincing than usual when played in pinks and toppers, and crinolines lend some additional comic business to the fight between Helena and Hermia. Little else can really be claimed for the idea. Its source, I fear, is the weakest part of *Nicholas Nickleby*: the Crummles' cod production of *Romeo and Juliet*. The mechanicals' play here is given as a similar burlesque of what we (wrongly) assume to have been standard nineteenth-century theatrical practice. Members of our premier dramatic company should have better things to do than repeatedly send up a misconception about the professional standards of their grandfathers.

Many productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the last ten years, it must be said, have been casting about for ideas, and, however reasons are obvious enough. Twice in this century the play has been made the pinnacle of a short period of theatrical innovation, once by Granville-Barker in 1914, then by Peter Brook in 1970, and such peaks leave troughs beyond them. The more coherent recent attempts at re-interpretation have based themselves

on abstract scholarly ideas about Elizabethan New-Platonism and its view of love and marriage. After such well-intentioned obscurity, it's perhaps no bad thing to see the play as a wholesome romp in colourful costumes.

But the slowness of this reading rapidly infects even those portions of the text which need no intrusive interpretation to render them significant. The account of the disrupted harmony, the comments on love, the exploration of theatrical illusion, even the psychological points made (following standard modern practice) by the doubling of Theseus and Hippolyta with Oberon and Titania - all these things are scrambled and diminished. There are occasional felicitous touches, such as the moment when Theseus carelessly steps half-way across the mechanicals' footlights for "The best in this kind are but shadows". Mere touches, however, cannot redeem the general slackness of the verse speaking (John Burgess's *Egeus* is an honourable exception) and the persistent uncertainty of tone.

Mike Guillim does his best to sparkle the present and to smoulder as Oberon. In both roles he remains indecisively marooned between the sinister and the benign. If that's a problem for him, it's a worse one for the minor fairies. Dizzying transitions between appearances as cannibal dolls from a horror-movie and as kindly nature spirits, with an occasional function as *corps de ballet* thrown in for good measure, leave the audience (and I should imagine, them) thoroughly confused.

The mechanicals have a good running gag about the forgetting of Snug's name, and a sharp perception of Flute's adolescent smuttiness. But Geoffrey Hutchings is a distinctly lightweight Bottom and, as a team, they content themselves with the easiest effects. As so often when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is played as a romp, in fact, the best opportunities fall to Hermia. The doll-like Jane Carr, plump, genial and sweetly spirited, sends them eagerly. She ends up the queen of the toybox.

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Oxford University Press

commentary

Harpoonist turns whale

By Mordaunt Vyner

Runyon on Broadway
King's Head Theatre Club

Runyon on Broadway might be better described as Robert Cushman reading selected Runyon from a battered orange folder and singing six songs loosely associated with the writer's life in a frail but earnest quaver to the lunchtime crowd on Upper Street. The theatre critic of the *Observer*, Cushman has adored Runyon all his life and this show is him rather anxiously sharing his love with the world. Coming out, in fact, he definitely isn't a natural, which lends a certain pathos to the occasion. This is Hamlet playing the clown and I had to lower my eyes more than once when his worried, steel-rimmed gaze met mine and found me not laughing. There is something about Cushman's scholarly presence - he is a gaunt, bearded figure - which brings, despite its owner's intention, an overcritical light to bear on his likeable material, as well as on his audience. To be Runyon is clearly his desire, but he is like a Sunday brawler with a sack labelled "swag". His skimpily white 1960s suit, flared trousers, black shirt and turtleneck cream tie are a travesty of Nathan Detroit, and somehow I can't associate bushy beards with Broadway.

Runyon was born in Manhattan, Kansas, in 1880 and died in the other Manhattan in 1946, having made it his own. He was the son of a journeyman printer-editor and had his first by-line at seventeen. He hit New York in 1910. Within a few years he was world-famous as an ace sports correspondent, then as a fiction writer. His later style of racy present-tense story-telling is what he is most remembered for. It is based on a certain trick of stating the obvious freshly, and a humorous manner of circumlocution.

At the end of his life, Runyon's name on a magazine-front was enough to swell its circulation by 60,000. He amassed a million, but was always liberal with his splash. He was a gambler, a dandy and a night hawk. He bought new clothes every day and had 200 hand-made suits. He is said to have bought over 2,000 birds over the years, paying for them but neglecting to collect them. "My time of day is the night-time" wrote the superb Frank Loesser for *Guys and Dolls*, "when the street belongs to the cop and the janitor with a mop and the street lamp fills the gutter with gold."

Runyon gave up booze early on in favour of his heart and his first wife, but he chain-smoked fatally and consumed forty cups of coffee a day. In the last years of his life he suffered from a "slight case of inarticulation": surgeons had removed his larynx in one of many painful operations to stem cancer, reducing his most gregarious of men to scribbling his arguments on pads, to be passed round the company at Lindy's and elsewhere. He described himself as a "born rebel, but lacking in moral courage". He had enough. Suffering from the barium needle treatment he was having, he wrote, in a moment of weakness, "Why me? why me?", adding the next morning, "Why not?" In the final year he worked harder than ever. Paid \$100,000 by Alexander Korda to write a film for Bing Crosby, he produced the cheque at the Stork Club and threw it on the floor in front of his friend Walter Winchell. "Why did you do that?" asked Winchell. "To see if it would bounce" wrote Runyon. When his black capitals became rather larger than usual, the producer Mike Todd wrote "Don't shout, Damon".

All this, issuing from the orange folder of Mr Cushman, is never less than touching, though it must be said that most of it comes straight out of Don Taddon's model "Memento of the

author" in his 1947 selection of Runyon's work, *Short Takes*. There is a certain Broadway critic in this book who delights his readers by "heaving the old harpoon into actors unless they act to suit him". It goes against the grain to knock this unpretentious enthusiast, but I left the King's Head this afternoon thinking that Damon Runyon wasn't quite such a funny man as I had thought he was when I went in, which wasn't really the object of the exercise.



"Angel" (1977), from the exhibition The Prints of Cecil Collins: A Retrospective, opening at the Tate Gallery on August 5.

A Ruskin conference

By John Batchelor

The Ruskin Gallery at Bembridge contains probably the most important collection of items relating to Ruskin in the world. This year James Dearden, Curator of the gallery, organized a conference of some forty Ruskinians from July 17 to 19, and in the opening paper he gave a valuable account of the acquisitions by J. H. Whitehouse in the 1930s which enabled the collection to be formed. Whitehouse's purchases are now divided between Ruskin's House, Brantwood, at Conistone in the Lake District (which Whitehouse also purchased) and the Ruskin Gallery at Bembridge.

A striking and refreshing feature of this conference was its diversity; the fact that its members were not all competing for the same ground. Among the papers were contributions from a zoologist, a lawyer - Eli Abramson, of the University of Chicago, who argued that Ruskin's writings might furnish us with a basis for a rule of law more flexible, and therefore better suited to twentieth-century problems - than the one we have inherited - and from an art historian, John Unrau, of the University of Western Ontario, whose work on Ruskin's annotations of St Mark's basilica in Venice indicated that Ruskin was capable of exact scholarship of a very high standard. John Unrau suggested that this aspect of his talent was more or less deliberately suppressed by his father, John James Ruskin, who insisted that the scholarship in *Stones of Venice* should be curtailed in favour

of moral ideas which he, John James, may well have supplied himself.

The diversity of the conference's membership reflects the scale, scope and ambition of Ruskin's writings. From a distance Ruskin's books look monumental; huge, self-contained blocks of masonry on the Victorian landscape. As one approaches them they are seen to be fluid and unstable, highly charged and intensely personal books which transcend the categories of criticism, autobiography, economics and politics but at the same time demand one's attention if Victorian thinking on any of these topics is to be properly understood.

"Ruskinians" is perhaps the only classification available for the members of such a gathering. Robert Hewson gave a clear and elegant account of a central paradox in Ruskin - he renounced disciples, and yet discipleship is, in a sense, a necessary condition for studying him. In the closing paper Nicholas Shrimpton presented a concrete and, as it seemed to me, conclusive discovery - namely, that Hopkins' "The Sea and the Skylark" is directly based on the chapter called "The Two Boyhoods" in *Modern Painters*, Volume V. It is a scandalous fact that apart from *Præterita* and "The Two Boyhoods", so few pieces of Ruskin are available in a modern edition; the chapter is included in J. D. Rosenberg's selection - and the conference emphasized the need for a new edition which would provide a text of at least the major works for the rising number of scholars and students who are interested in this extraordinary, but central, Victorian figure.

Among this week's contributors

NOEL ANNAN was Provost of King's College, Cambridge from 1956 to 1966. His books include *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time*.

MICHAEL BANTON is the author of *Racial Minorities*, 1972, and *Police-Community Relations*, 1973.

JOHN BAYLEY's most recent book, *Shakespeare and Tragedy*, was published earlier this year.

HAROLD BEAVER is Reader in American Literature at the University of Warwick.

PETER CONRAD's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*, 1977, and *Imagining America*, 1980.

PATRICIA CRAIG's critical study, *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction*, a collaboration with Mary Cadogan, was published earlier this year.

CHARLES DAVIDSON is a prosopographer, specializing in early twentieth-century Ireland. He reviews regularly for the *Irish Times* and *Books Ireland*.

DENIS DONOHUE is Henry James Professor of Letters at New York University.

DOUGLAS DUNN's new collection of poems *St Kilda's Parliament*, will be published in the autumn.

ERIK DE MAUNY was BBC Radio Correspondent in Moscow from 1972 to 1974.

D. J. ENRIGHT's recent collections of poems include *A Faust Book*, 1978. He is editor of *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-80*, 1980.

ROY FOSTER is the author of *Charles Stewart Parnell: The Man and his*

Family, 1976. His *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* will be published later this year.

ERNEST GELLNER is Professor of Philosophy at the London School of Economics. His most recent book is *Muslim Society*, 1981.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING's *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions* is reviewed on page 863.

NORMAN HAMMOND is Archaeological Correspondent of *The Times*.

TONY HARRISON's poem on page 879 is one of a number of new sonnets from "The School of Eloquence"; the original sequence was published last year.

MARTIN HENIG's *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites* was published in 1978.

HAROLD JAMES is a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College London. His books include *A Concise History of France*, 1970.

PAUL JOHNSON's recent books include *A History of Christianity*, 1976, and *Enemies of Society*, 1977.

JENNIFER JOHNSTON's new novel, *The Christmas Tree*, will be published shortly.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

EDNA LONGLEY is a lecturer in English at The Queen's University, Belfast. She is editor of *A Language not to be Betrayed: Selected prose of Edward Thomas*, 1981.

JOHN LUCAS is the editor of *The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy*, 1979. His *Literature of Change* was republished earlier this year.

DEREK MAHON's new collection of poems, *A Courtyard in Delft* is reviewed on page 888.

JOHN MOLE's new collection of poems, *Feeding the Lake*, will be published later this year.

BRIAN MOORE's novels include *Judith Hearne*, 1955, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, 1960, and *Catholics*, 1972. His new novel, *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes*, will be published in the autumn.

LEON O BROIN's most recent book is *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924*, 1976.

FRANK OMSBY is the editor of *Poets from the North of Ireland*, 1979.

TOM PAULIN's most recent collection of poems, *The Strange Museum*, was published last year.

MICHAEL SCAMMELL is writing a biography of Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

NICHOLAS SHRIMPTON is preparing an edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Junction Books "Plays in Performance" series.

WILLIAM TREVOR's most recent novel, *Other People's Worlds*, was published last year.

ROBIN ROBBINS has edited the forthcoming Oxford English Text of Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.

ALAN RYAN is a lecturer in Politics at New College, Oxford.

J. R. VINCENT is Professor of Modern History at the University of Bristol.

BERNARD WASSERSTEIN is the author of *Britain and the Jews in Europe, 1939-1945*, 1978.

HUGO WILLIAMS's most recent collection of poems is *Love Life*, 1980.

to the editor

'Conservatives and Conservatism'

Sir, - J. R. Vincent's review of *Conservatives and Conservatism* (July 10) may or may not be considered fair by the authors of that book, but as a comment on Conservatism it is at best eccentric. The main point of the review appears to be that attempts by Conservative thinkers to elaborate an organized theory are doomed to failure because "real" Conservative beliefs, "if they exist" (sic), are almost impossible to explain. If no one has yet articulated "real" Conservatism, why did not Professor Vincent describe it to us, since he seems so sure that existing writings on the subject are inadequate? It is difficult to see what purpose is served by such unnecessary obscurantism about a set of political beliefs with a perfectly respectable intellectual pedigree, unless it be that the easiest (most facile?) way of attacking something is patronizingly to deny that it exists at all.

The misuse of powdered milk in the Third World is doubtless a most worthy subject, but its use as a comparative yardstick for recent Conservative publications is mildly insulting to such authors as Gilmour, Utley, Scruton, Cowling, Powell, Letwin, to name but a few, who may reasonably be expected to hope that their work will not be dismissed as so much powdered philosophy. There may be a touch of truth in the reviewer's comment that Conservative theory, as found in books, is unreal. This is perhaps a characteristic that it shares with political theories in general. I would venture to suggest, however, that the description would be more credibly applied to many other theories, both Left and Right, before that of Conservatism. It is precisely the strength of many Conservative theories that they do not make extravagant claims on their own behalf, and remain firmly rooted in experience rather than in Utopia.

Michael Oakeshott, whom Professor Vincent singles out for particularly dismissive treatment, is thus especially wronged. It is wilfully misleading to imply that the paths of Oakeshott's intimations could lead only into "sociological contexts". Traditions of political and cultural behaviour do not have to be described in sociological terms, nor in this country do they consist overwhelmingly of "secular progressivism". Where is the latter in British monarchism, in the Orange Lodges, in preservationism or in the reluctance of British working men to be made efficient? It is undeniable that sometimes traditions are unclear, or violated, or that they are understood differently by particular individuals. This is made clear, if it would not otherwise be so, by Professor Vincent's view of some of our traditions. It does not then follow that traditions are not useful, even vital, in formulating political principles.

Neo-liberals are a little less unreasonably treated in this review. Their worst sin, it seems, is to "fall down on sociology": a sin that must surely be venial rather than mortal. They are given credit for being right about markets, but are accused of failing to acknowledge that "making money is a deviant activity". It is understandable that an academic might regard making money as deviant, but there must currently be a dreadful outbreak of deviancy if every participant in the thriving "Black economy", every small businessman or street trader is to be classed as deviant. My main objection, though, to this discussion of market economics and entrepreneurship is that these notions are not the sole property of "neo-liberals", and can quite consistently find a place within Conservative tradition. Edmund Burke, whose anti-Jacobinism Professor Vincent interprets as an attack on capitalism, would probably have agreed with this. Indeed, Burke's view of the economic sphere arguably has more in common with that of Humo

than with that of Cobbett or Coleridge.

As an explanation of Conservatism this review article is inadequate, and it does a disservice to political philosophy as well as to Conservatism in suggesting that it can be reduced to a "folk ideology". Intellectual Conservatism is alive and well, even if Professor Vincent has not noticed.

JONATHAN BRADLEY,
14 Hughenden Road, Clifton,
Bristol BS8 2TT.

'The Kornilov Affair'

Sir, - In his letter (July 10) Kyril FitzLyon deals admirably with most of the irrelevances which constitute Patrick Flaherty's attack on him (Letters, July 3). If I take up Mr Flaherty's challenge and reply to his letter, it is mainly because I find his procedure of attacking my reviewer rather than myself a particularly objectionable one. To take reviewers to task for sharing the opinions of the authors they review is to attempt to discourage them from writing about books they largely approve of, and smacks of literary intimidation.

As regards the assessment of Kornilov's character, I tried in my book to play down my own estimate of the man. He was certainly not, as Mr Flaherty seems to suppose, a typical reactionary Russian army general. Very few career officers of his day rose to such high rank as he did from a similar background, in his case that of a poor Cossack border settler's family in Central Asia. He had an exceptional capacity for individual initiative, and outstanding courage (how many senior Russian officers taken prisoner in World War I managed to escape?). Only a lukewarm, monarchist, Kornilov, who combed the February Revolution with enthusiasm, though we have no record of his political stance prior to it, nor evidence that he would have preferred a régime of the type later characterized as "fascist" to straight-forward democracy; and I do not remember ever seeing any reliable report to indicate that he held anti-semitic views. The primary and basic motive of his behaviour in August 1917 was not to establish any definite political order in the country, nor yet to help the army to maintain and strengthen its grip on affairs of state. What prompted him was rather the simple desire to carry out reforms in the disintegrating army which would make it possible to carry on the war and avoid a humiliating peace such as that finally imposed on Lenin in 1918 at Brest-Litovsk. In striving towards this end, Kornilov was bound to come into contact with political forces, including the Provisional Government, on whose support he had relied and which at the outset he was ready to lay to defend. Other political questions should, he believed - as did many moderates - be held in abeyance until the war had been brought to a successful conclusion. His own views, therefore, as occasionally revealed in the short time before his death, were not being definite or representing deep or settled political convictions. Such reticence merits our respect rather than our derision. As a soldier, Kornilov knew where his duty lay, and he could have played a positive role in the Russian Revolution had not malevolent suspicion and double-crossing prevented it.

GEORGE KATKOV.
As from: St Antony's College,
Woodstock Rd, Oxford.

The British publishers of Jean Orleu's *Voltaire*, reviewed on page 485 of the *TLS* for March 13, are Columbia Books; only the book's American publishers, Doubleday, were noted in the review.

The correct title and details of the book mentioned in a note on page 294 of the *TLS* for March 13, are: *Sidney Morris Cockerell and Joan Rix Tebbutt, Thirty Recent Bindings*, with an introduction by Sir Harry Barnes. K. D. Duval, French, Foss. (1980).

Eichenbaum and Structuralism

Sir, - While looking up footnotes to a translation of the Russian formalists' writings on cinema which I am currently editing, I had to consult the bibliography of Boris Eichenbaum, and to my surprise - dismay, really - I learned that he had indeed published a piece, "Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' (A New Theory)" in the *Criterion*, 15 (1931), 50-57. In other words, in my first letter (June 26) I drew a wrong inference from the Read-Carver correspondence. Yet the "discovery" of Eichenbaum's article has only increased my perplexity regarding the circumstances of this strange point of contact between Anglo-American and Russian "formalisms" - and for two different reasons. First, because Eichenbaum's study is neither an example of formalist nor yet of sociological (let alone Marxist) criticism, but rather a straightforward exercise in the history of ideas; and secondly, because it seems highly unlikely that in 1930, at the very time when formalism was officially censured in the Soviet Union, Eichenbaum would have dared to submit any study, no matter how innocuous, for publication in the West. As it happens, the *Criterion* essay is Eichenbaum's single foreign publication in the 1920s and 1930s; and he was not again published in English until the early 1970s. In point of fact, "Tolstoy's 'War and Peace'" is not a separate article at all; it is merely a brief excerpt from the first volume of Eichenbaum's monumental literary biography of Leo Tolstoy, which appeared in the Russian original in 1928. The subsequent volumes, each dedicated to a decade of Tolstoy's career, came out in 1931 and, with an unfortunate delay, in 1960. Even more sadly, the manuscript of the fourth volume was lost - drowned - during Eichenbaum's evacuation from the besieged Leningrad in 1942. In the *Criterion* excerpt, Eichenbaum convincingly argued that one of the key philosophical and political sources of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869) was Ben Proudhon's treatise *La Guerre et la Paix: Recherches sur le principe de la constitution du droit des gens* (1861; 1864 in Russian translation). It may interest your readers that Eichenbaum's extraordinary work of literary scholarship, comparable in scope to Leon Edel's biography of Henry James and in methodology to

Joseph Frank's multi-volume study of Dostoevsky, is about to appear in English: *Tolstoy in the Sixties and Tolstoy in the Seventies* (Arlis, 2901 Featherway, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104).

One day we may even find out what prompted Eichenbaum's publication in the *Criterion* - and what prompted T. S. Eliot's misgivings about the Russian critic.

Could I also possibly comment on Graham Hough's review (June 26) of *Working with Structuralism* by David Lodge, one of the few Anglophone critics who has tried to integrate the concepts of the Prague and Parisian brands of structuralism with Anglo-American critical discourse? In Mr Hough's view, the distinctiveness of David Lodge's criticism rests in the fact that, while "acutely aware of the current winds of doctrine", his approach remains that "of the craftsman rather than of the doctrinaire".

A very British trait, according to Mr Hough. But much the same thing, in fact, could be said of Jakobson and Barthes, the two major theoretical influences on Mr Lodge, to the extent that these scholars have not been just esoteric structuralists but structuralists who have been able to call the Aristotelian mode of literary criticism. Although structuralism may well be a monstrous, nine-headed Hydra that justifiably sends many literary critics running for cover, structural poetics, whether practised in Petersburg, Prague or Paris, is absolutely central to all twentieth-century practical criticism. But it still remains to be seen what, if any, relevance "structuralist" exercises in modern pathology, whether of the kind in anthropologists Lévi-Strauss, or in linguistics and other prohibitions, cultural archaeology (Foucault, or insanity and sexuality), politics (Althusser, or Marxist malpractice), philosophy (Derrida, or anti-phenomenology), psychoanalysis (Lacan, or pataphysics), have to the "normal" business of literary criticism - British or not. For the time being, let us rescue structural poetics (and be extension the semiotics of art and culture) from those phantasms of structuralism. If we succeed in doing so, words like "defamiliarization" and "foregrounding" will cease to be "beastly" and will gain proper currency as English versions, respectively, of the Russian neologism *ostranenie* (ie, "making strange" or possibly seeing from a "new side") and of the Czech technical term *aktualizace* (ie, actualization), which in Prague School theory is a dialectical counterpart to *automatizace*, the inevitable automatization or ossification, if you prefer a biological metaphor - of the expressive means of everyday as well as poetic language.

Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than Friday, August 21. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 40, Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of August 28.

Competitions No 59

1 Tread back - and back, the lewd and lay -
Grace guard your tongue! - what never care

Heard yet, the Muse's man, today
I bid the boys and maidens hear,

Kings herd it on their subject
droves
But Jove's the herd that keeps the kings -

Jove of the Oclants: simple Jove's
Mere eyebrow rocks this round of things.

2 There are those whose study is of
smells,
And to attentive schools
rehearse

How something mixed with
something else
Makes something worse.

3 After your death, the lavish heir
Will quickly drive away his woe;
The wine you kept with so much care
Along the marble floor shall flow.

Result of Competition No 57

Winner: Alistair Elliot, 27 Hawthorn Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 4DB. A special mention among the runners-up for Gavin Ewart.

Answers:
1 *Animula vagula blandula*
Is it true that your origin's
glandular?

2 *Un marle naufragé (de Doncistre)*
Four prière, au milieu du déastre,
Répétait à genoux:
Ces mots simples et doux:
"Scintille, scintille, petit astre!"

3 Some limericks never wash clean,
from their heads to their toes they're
obscene;
though it's not these extremes
that elicit the scuzzing
but the things that they've got in
between.

Gavin Ewart, "Limericks" (second stanza)

guage. After all, does it take any longer to say "defamiliarize" or "foreground" than "Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch"?

F. W. GALAN,
The University of Texas at Austin,
Austin, Texas 78712.

Rimbaud

Sir, - I should like to express my appreciation of David Gascoyne's perceptive and illuminating review of my *Rimbaud: A Critical Introduction* (July 17). May I point out, however, that the majority of the translations are not by me but by Professor Roger Little of Trinity College, Dublin; and, as stated in the Preface, these are indicated by the initials "R.L."

C. A. HACKETT

Shawford Close, Shawford, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 2BL.



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On the examination of two boys (and they have good reason to think there are others) they were entirely con-

Fairy-tales for the Gilded Age

By Harold Beaver

HORATIO ALGER:
A Fancy of Hers and The Disagreeable Woman
Introduction by Ralph D. Gardner
179pp. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, £11.20.
0 442 24716 8

The name Horatio Alger has become a byword for phenomenal success, for a rise from rags to riches conceivable only in America. For three decades, from the 1860s to the 1890s, some 140 books by Alger, with such alliterative titles as *Brave and Bold*, *Sink or Swim*, *Strive and Succeed*, *Strong and Steady*, *Try and Trust*, *Fame and Fortune*, tumbled from the press at the rate of three or four a year. Their alliterative heroes (Frank Fowler, Ben Barclay, Tom Temple, Mark Mason, Paul Prescott, Ralph Raymond) ruled the minds and imaginations of all who grew up in the United States between the Civil War and the Depression.

Never had there been such a surefire bestseller as Horatio Alger. His estimated sales range from twenty to four hundred million, beating Mark Twain and Louisa May Alcott and Booth Tarkington – even Dickens. He was neither as didactic as school primers, nor as lurid as dime novels, nor as terrifying as Grimm, nor as exhortative as *Peter Parley*, nor as woebegone as Andersen. His were spunky tales in which the town bully was whipped and newboys became bankers, farmboys senators, rail-splitters President of the United States. The bootblacks and messenger boys were mostly fifteen years old and usually orphaned. If country boys, they had lost their family farm to some unscrupulous villain. All had enemies: swaggering snobs, drunken swindlers, ex-convict stepfathers, who snugged or kidnapped or framed them. But they met disaster head-on – literally, in the shape of oncoming vehicles, runaway horses, or speeding trains – surviving against all odds. So by luck and pluck they rose to be clerks and invested their rewards in real estate or Erie Railroad shares. By the time they were eighteen they were well on the way to wealth and bourgeois respectability.

But these honest, enterprising lads were not altogether pious. There was a foretaste of Emil and the detectives about them as they crisscrossed from Lower Broadway to the East River clearing up the mystery of their identity or recovering their lawful legacy. They puffed penny cigars, tossed down whiskey at three cents a shot, and attended Bowery theatres. But they also studied at night and were resolved to better themselves. The implicit motto was: "If Ragged Dick can do it, so can you!" Country lads, still in the vast majority, could imaginatively roam the teeming streets of Manhattan; city lads could set out on hazardous exploits to the Great Plains or Rocky Mountains. All showed the immigrant masses that the native virtues were initiative and shrewdness; that America, above all, was the land of opportunity and prosperity.

No wonder there has been an Alger revival in recent years. The price of some first editions has rocketed into the thousands. But Alger's name has also been hedged round by salacious gossip. This idealist in the wake of Benjamin Franklin has been called "a slave to pederastic desires that even the most promiscuous followers of the American ideal still condemn as morally unacceptable". Ralph D. Gardner, who first researched the evidence for his biography, *Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era* (1964), here charts the homosexual issue – or issue – for what it's worth.

In 1864, after graduating from Harvard and the Cambridge Divinity School, Alger was ordained as minister of the First Parish Unitarian Church of Brewster on Cape Cod. Sixteen months later, accused of "unnatural familiarity with boys", he was dismissed from his pulpit. The church wrote to the American Unitarian Association in Boston that

on the examination of two boys (and they have good reason to think there are others) they were entirely con-

firmed and unanimous in the opinion of his being guilty to the full extent of the above specified charges.

Whereupon the committee sent for Alger and to him specified the charges and evidence of his guilt, which he neither denied or attempted to extenuate but received it with the apparent calmness of an old offender – and hastily left town in the very next train, for parts unknown – probably Boston.

But what Horatio Alger actually did remains unclear. Maybe he was just another Wing Biddlebaum, the schoolmaster in Sherwood Anderson's story *Hans*, who was hounded from a Pennsylvania town. The committee was all in a froth with charges of an abominable, heinous crime "which is too revolting to think of in the most brutal of our race – the commission of which under any circumstances, is to a refined or christian mind too utterly incomprehensible". The thirty-four-year-old Alger at least retired with dignity. But the charge, in retrospect, has stuck. He never married and lived for years in the Newsboys' Lodging House on Fulton Street where he found much of the material for his stories. John Seelye summed up in the *New York Times Book Review*:

If Alger had indeed been an active homosexual, he would have been as a fox among chickens, but the very fact of his presence in the [Newsboys' Lodging House] for so many years suggests that, whatever his inclinations, he restrained them. Instead, proximity bred perceptiveness – Alger knew what boys wanted from a book better than most children's writers, then and now.

In fact, Alger had written for adults before turning to teenage fiction. As many as nine dime novels were serialized while he was still at Divinity School. But after the runaway success of *Ragged Dick* in 1868 he was discouraged by his publisher from continuing his readership and was forced to issue adult novels surreptitiously. *A Fancy of Hers* was published anonymously in 1877 and never promoted lest it hurt Alger's juvenile market. But he was fond of the book and kept tinkering with it until it was reprinted in *Minsky's Magazine* seven years before his death in 1892. The attraction must have been due, in part, to the autobiographical touches from his own child-

hood in the impoverished manse of the Rev. Horatio Alger Sr. *The Disagreeable Woman* was first published in 1895 under the pseudonym Julian Starr. They make a finely contrasted pair of New Hampshire and Manhattan life, still as readable today as a century ago.

Both are mysteries of a kind in which a wealthy lady, incognito, inhabits the humdrum world of a New England village or New York boarding-house in order to test the generosity and decency of a home-spun American community. It is a device familiar from Haroun-al-Raschid's Baghdad to *Measure for Measure*, cast here in female guise. Alger's customary formula is flipped upside down. It is the benefactress now, not the ragged youth, who concerns us; it is her moral scrutiny, piercing through pomp and sham, that confronts us with the knowledge of ever-present, divine aid. Trite as it may seem, these fictions are saved by Alger's absolute faith in their fairy-tale convention; they are enhanced by his ironic delight in the hypocritically shabby societies which his slumming divinities (descending like Zeus in a shower of gold) expose.

The Lady Bountiful in *A Fancy of Hers* is a wealthy orphan who, instead of visiting Newport or Bar Harbor, like a proper Jamesian heroine, opts for schoolteaching in remote New England. The world of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* or Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware* is opened up to the discerning gaze of a social butterfly who can dance rings round the rural oafs with their sewing circles and donation parties and school committees and ecclesiastical (part Methodist, part Congregational) Sunday School outings. Soon she is adored by all the children and finds true love. Her "experiment" brings its own reward.

So, in Alger's other novel reprinted here, does that of the blun, brusque "disagreeable woman" of a Manhattan boarding-house who cuts through all humbug and pretension, but seems less and less disagreeable as she moves stage-centre, longing to be tapped of her wealth for true heart-felt charity. At the melodramatic crisis she rediscovers her lover whom she had once rejected from pride and obstinacy. The ending is fatuous. The first person account, by a young doctor, may seem jejune compared to a Jamesian or Broussain command of such narratives. But there is no need to read it with the arch gaze of a Daisy Ashford. Alger's

magazine style, with its rapid notation and generous use of dialogue, had plenty to teach the generation of Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald. Even its easy acquaintance with town scenery – with Macy's and Palmer's Theatre, the Dime Museums and visits to Delmonico's for ice-cream – had only recently been naturalized by William Denn Howells for a more ambitious type of novel. (This edition is embellished with a fine clutch of original art-work for Alger's stories, as well as photographs and etchings of old New York landmarks like the Fifth Avenue Hotel at Madison Square and Macy's on its original site at Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth Street.)

But, for all their realistic detail, it is as fairy-tales that these two novellas demand to be read. Horatio Alger was a master of that oldest of all fictional forms, Greek New Comedy, with its pious little rich girls, its villains, its pious, its disguises, its gilded wife, the blustering husband, the elderly inamorato, its ultimate reversals and revelations. What is peculiar to Alger is that such traditional ceremonies of love must invariably be blessed by money. This is the sacred fount that can heal all ills, supplying proper sustenance or a proper roof or a proper education. Decent instincts were for Alger, as for Whittman, the precondition of American existence so that it needed only the blessing of cash to foster their potential to a radiant presence.

Yet there was a clash, which his fables never tried to resolve, between such idealism and everyday pragmatism. It was a clash, inherent in American ideology itself, between salvation by positive thinking and salvation by managerial control. The individual had to make a personal decision to invest his talents for his neighbour's benefit and to subject himself to the impersonal forces of a market economy. In an increasingly utilitarian world, Horatio Alger plugged the old American values. The largesse of both benefactresses comes from invested capital. In an age of conspicuous consumption, as Veblen called it, the lesson of self-improvement by charity is of these fables ultimately teach. The Manhattan heiress bequeathes her funds to a needy pastor, but apparently has enough left to marry a poor artist and embark for Italy on a two year honeymoon.

point of view, a modestly stoical theory of how to cope with the contemporary world – in itself quite commendable – that he wants to put across through the medium of fiction, and if necessary at its expense. Only this can explain such lifeless characters, such turgid dialogue. And Strand, the central consciousness, through whose eyes we see all the action, must be one of the most boring narrators ever to make demands on a reader's time. Hardy's admonition has never seemed more pertinent.

DAVID JORDAN:
Double Red
156pp. Andre Deutsch. £5.95.
0 233 97329 X

London merchant bank Thorne Reinhard is being blackmailed by a terrorist organisation which threatens to reveal details of infamous scandalous dating from the beginning of the century. Whizz kid Thomas Kane investigates. Plenty of action, but the narrative fits together surprisingly loosely. Faults are redeemed, however, by marvellous extracts from the diary of André de Grosworden, of the Imperial Russo-Siberian Bank in St Petersburg, who was involved with the infamous double agent Azev. Once again, David Jordan implies that the best training for merchant bankers is two years with the SAS.

T. J. Binyon

Liberty, equality, fascism . . .

By Douglas Johnson

BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY
L'Idéologie française
340pp. Paris: Grasset.
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On May Day 1981, Bernard-Henri Lévy was the principal organizer of a mass demonstration in which representatives of the immigrant population of France marched from the Élysée Palace to the Place du Colonel Fabien. This parade of those who have been deprived of political rights thus started and ended at what were described as the twin bastions of French racism: the Presidency of the Republic and the headquarters of the French Communist Party.

It is not surprising that M. Lévy finds it easier to make enemies than friends. His new book, *L'Idéologie française*, has made him many enemies and has succeeded in what must have been his intention, that of creating a sensation. It has aroused more indignation and protest than any recent publication in France, and its defenders have tended to be mild and regretful rather than vigorous.

It is a passionate and explosive book. *L'Idéologie française* (note the definite article, it is not called "Une Idéologie française") is about fascism and racism, and it claims that both are endemic in modern French thought. Echoing Georges Marchais's proclamation of a communism which will be truly French, "un communisme aux couleurs de la France", Lévy claims that there is "un fascisme aux couleurs de la France". What might appear as accidental happenings which give rise to explosions of antisemitism – such as the arrest of a junior officer who is Jewish on the charge of selling military secrets to the Germans, or the racist laws proclaimed by the government of Vichy in the wake of the greatest military defeat in French history – are made to appear an integral part of French culture. Doubtless the facts that in December, 1980, the communist mayor of Vitry personally took the lead in the destruction of an immigrant hostel in his commune, and that in the following February the communist mayor of Montigny-Lès-Cormeilles publicly denounced a working-class Moroccan family for drug-pushing, are not to be seen merely as examples of electoral tactics. Racism is ingrained in French attitudes.

When a French intellectual wishes to prove anything these days, he reaches for the opinion polls, and Lévy comes up with some good statistics. After the violent bomb attack on the synagogue in the rue Copernic in Paris in October 1980, a poll published by *L'Express* reported that 49 per cent of French people thought there were too many "North Africans" in France. In 1943, Lévy points out, 51 per cent of French people replied "no" when asked "Do you like the Jews?" Thus there is, he claims, a constant in French attitudes which can be shown statistically, as well as in other ways.

The other ways which Lévy sees in order to demonstrate the existence of a

"real" France which is both fascist and racist are dominated by his love of quotation. He takes a whole series of writers and, by giving extracts from their works, demonstrates their ideas. Some of these authors one would expect to find in such a book: Maurras, and other members of the Action Française, Gobineau, Barrès, Sorel, Drumont, Drieu La Rochelle. Others are less expected. There is, for example, an early reference to Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, the left-wing Catholic and founder of the ultra-liberal and humanist periodical *Esprit*, who is quoted in 1936 as having admired the vitality and energy of fascism. Gide makes an appearance, in which "he wonders whether a dictatorship is not required to solve France's problems. Bergson is presented as having acted as a sort of messenger-boy for Hegel and as an inspiration for those who, in the 1930s, were in search of the organic and the intuitive, a search which had sinister implications. Péguy is at one point described as "Péguy le raciste", who wanted "le soleil de France" to shine only on "la race gaillarde", and who believed in a form of racism "aux couleurs de la France profonde".

Obviously, much of this has to be accepted. We are accustomed to hearing about Péguy and forms of pre-1914 fascism, when he, along with members of the Action Française and of the Cercle Charles Proudhon, and of small groups who gave themselves curious names such as "royalist-socialists", were seeking for a socialism which would be "ni juif, ni allemand". We are also accustomed to the multitude of French politicians and theorists who, exasperated by the difficulties, if not the decadence, of parliamentary government, have expressed a desire for strong and efficient rule. There is only a more sophisticated version of the popular cynicism about politicians or the simple belief that "strong government would be better than ridiculous government". "Il nous faut au homme à poigne" is the chorus of the café. Why should the intellectuals not say the same thing, more philosophically and didactically?

But does all this add up to a culture of fascism and racism? Lévy justifies his selection of quotations by comparing it to Foucault's "archéologie du savoir", as if he were cutting into successive layers of significance. But the isolated quotation is misleading. More often than not Lévy is playing a verbal game. Because someone thinks it essential that France should have a fascist government, he is not necessarily a fascist (and Lévy avoids the issue of whether Bonapartism or Gaullism can be called fascist), any more than if he uses the word "race" or describes some aspect of thought as "Jewish", he is necessarily a racist. Alain de Benoist, of the Nouvelle Droite, (an old enemy of Lévy's who is strangely absent from this volume), has commented on the phenomenon of what he calls "sémitophilie", the belief that by abolishing a word, such as "race", one abolishes its subject. Lévy might be said to suffer from "sémitophilie", the belief that if you use a word then you necessarily

subscribe to any sentiment it may be held to contain. One is reminded of the complaint of British diplomats serving in Hitlerian Germany: If ever they were photographed waving from a balcony or from a train window, the published photograph made them look as if they were giving the Nazi salute.

It would be relatively easy to compile an anthology of British writers to suggest that "racism" was also a characteristic of British culture. "Blessed are the pure in race for they shall inherit the earth!" so speaks a character in one of Disraeli's novels. At the same time many Englishmen were beginning to explain the backwardness of Africa in terms of a fundamental backwardness among African races, and there were those who explained away the unwelcome surprise of the Indian Mutiny by pointing to some unknowable quality of the Indian mind. In France, reaction to Gobineau's *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* was far from favourable. Tocqueville, who had dismissed racial explanations of American history as the result of historians' laziness, refused Gobineau, and Renan thought that while the racial factor may have been important for primitive civilizations, it had progressively lost its significance. Such criticisms, and the general coolness of the French response to him, exasperated Gobineau, who described his compatriots as the world's greatest cowards in matters of science.

Some of Lévy's argument is simply bizarre. "Péguy nationalist? Péguy socialist?" he asks, and then dismisses the questions as being of little interest. What is important, he claims, is that the two come together, and one discovers "un national-socialisme à la française" – one is reminded of Mr Picken's acquaintance who was reputed to have prepared for his article on "Chinese Mythology" by consulting the encyclopedia first under "China" and then under "Metaphysics".

Lévy's other method of studying "notre pensée réactionnaire" is historical, but no less controversial. The Vichy affair, he writes, divided France into two camps, and practically led to civil war – an obvious exaggeration. Then there was Vichy, and it is on this period that Lévy bases the greatest part of his case, as he lists examples of how Vichy chose, of its own free will, to initiate the persecution of Jews, of how the Communist Party sought at certain times to cooperate with the Germans and to assist in the trial of the Third Republic's leaders (such as Léon Blum), and of how a collection of well-educated and able technocrats and civil servants came together at the Ecole des Cadres d'Uriage (near Grenoble) in order to prepare for the national revolution in which the new France would be closely associated with Nazi Germany.

Objections can be made to all these arguments. The Vichy government (as Lévy readily admits) was a varied and shifting group of people, and was far from being united in antisemitism. The Communist Party had for a time (from

1929 to 1933 for example) chosen to treat the Third Republic as a fascist organization, and if the logic whereby such imprisoned communists as Alfred Coste and François Billoux sought to join in the work of the Cour Suprême de Riom is curious, it can hardly constitute what Lévy calls "le Pétainisme rouge". Lévy admits that the whole of the Ecole d'Uriage joined the Resistance movement in November 1942, but he should also recall that many of the technocrats who were associated with Vichy, such as Gabriel Le Roy Ladurie, Barnand and Pucheu, had started their careers with the Maison Worms and were denounced by more extreme collaborators as members of an Anglo-Jewish syndicate, and that such an unbalanced antisemitism as Pierre Constantini was, during these years, denouncing the Jewish synarchy which was seeking to control the Vichy administration.

Things are never so simple as Lévy claims. And yet when all his mistakes are pointed out, and all the defects of his reasoning allowed for, one wonders whether there is not something in his argument after all. It remains true that France has shown enthusiasm for racial persecution, and this cannot always be explained away in terms of foolishness. Sorel was, in some ways, a remarkably perceptive thinker; at the same time he could write violently and wildly, as when he said that France's struggle against the Jews could be compared to America's struggle against the yellow peril. Many of those surrounding Pétain were remarkably able in terms of their knowledge of economics and planning, but their romanticism led them to regrettable follies (it was said of one of these young men that he had the greatest technological mind of the century only he had not yet reached the age of political puberty).

But how can we explain the popularity of Drumont and of *La Libre Parole*, a newspaper regularly read both by the *courts* and by the *communards*? How can we understand the unpopularity of the innocent and martyred Dreyfus? How could otherwise honourable men attack Blum, or Mendès-France, simply because they happened to be Jewish? It is an undoubted fact that during the Occupation years there were Frenchmen who outdid the Germans in their racialist zeal, and that the experiment of the Vichy state was not

regarded simply as a temporary episode in French history, but as a new and exciting departure. It is also true that an intellectual group such as the Nouvelle Droite, for all that it avoids crude racialism, has helped, through its insistence on the need for racial purity in Europe as well as vis-à-vis the Eskimos and Latin-American Indians, to revive a certain climate of racialism.

France is a country which has always been susceptible to conspiracy theories of history, which has always looked suspiciously at the group fraternities within its own society and which has always sought to intellectualize the reasons for its own uncertain destiny. Where doctrinal *faiter* than *prévoir* socialism has predominated, it has been only too easy for French thinkers to see how the bourgeoisie has exploited the proletariat, or how the bourgeoisie has, in its turn, been exploited by the Jews (or Protestant bankers, American finance-capital, multi-national companies, the Washington-Brussels-Tokyo axis). Where what de Gaulle called "the internal demons" of French history have been only too apparent, then the natural compensation has been nationalism. In the country where the words "US G. Home" figured on walls long before the great vogue for graffiti began, is it surprising that there should now be slogans against Jews, Arabs, Portuguese, Africans, Turks and all those countries whose exports to France are supposedly responsible for her current economic difficulties? In a country where bureaucratic centralization has made change difficult, it is inevitable that there should have been a cult of action, and that people should take a benevolent view of such characteristics as impatience and energy.

Bernard-Henri Lévy is short on explanations, and short also on recommendations. In his earlier books he regretted the existence of totalitarianism but failed to suggest what could be done to avoid it, other than to change the nature of man and thereby get rid of "la barbarie à visage humain". Those who led, and who were led by, the events of 1968, have always been strong starters and disappointing finishers. But, like 1968, *L'Idéologie française* cannot be dismissed lightly. It remains in the mind and its challenge cannot be ignored.

Grey Matter

The ogling bottle cork with tasselled fez bowing and scraping, rolling goo-goo eyes is gippo King Farouk, whose lewd leer says:

I've had the lot, my lad, all shapes and sizes!

One night we kept him prancing and he poured, filtered through his brains, his bulk of booze. The whizky pantaloon sash sans ash or cord swished dad to the brink of twin taboos. As King Farouk's eyes rolled, dad rolled his own: *That King Farouk!* he said, and almost came (though in the end it proved too near the bone) to mentioning both sex and death by name.

I woke dad with what's left. King Leer's stare stuck, though I shake him, and his fixed Sphinx smile take in the ultimate a man can bare and that dry Nothingness beyond the Nile.

Tony Harrison

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The Woods

'Search me', I said. 'I'm a city boy myself.
They must be crocuses.'
- Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift*

Two years we spent
down there, in a quaint
outbuilding bright with recent paint.
A green retreat,
secluded and sedate,
part of a once great estate,
it watched our old
bone-shaker as it growled
with guests and groceries through heat and cold,
and heard you tocsin
meal-times with a spoon
while I sat working in the sun.
Above the yard
an old clock had expired
the night Lenin arrived in Petrograd.
Bourbons and Romanovs
had removed their gloves
in the drawing-rooms and alcoves
of the manor-house;
but these illustrious
ghosts never imposed on us.
Enough that the pond
steamed, the apples ripened,
the chestnuts on the gravel opened.
Ragwort and hemlock,
cinquefoil and lady's-maid,
throve in the shadows at the back;
beneath the trees
foxgloves and wood-anemones
looked up with fearful, metamorphic eyes.
We woke the rooks
on narrow, winding walks
familiar from the story-books,
or visited
a disused garden shed
where gas-masks from the war decayed;
and we knew peace
splintering the thin ice
on the bath-tub drinking-trough for cows.
But how could we
survive indefinitely
so far from the city and the sea?
Finding, at last,
too creamy for our taste
the fat profusion of the feast,
we travelled on
to doubt and speculation,
our birthright and our proper portion.
Another light
than ours convenes the mute
attention of those woods tonight -
while we, released
from that pale paradise,
consult the darkness in another place.

Derek Mahon

remainders

BY ERIC KORN

The usual overdressed and be-titled crowd filled the pews with their scented pampers, rustling their silks, patting their dyed hair and surreptitiously powdering their noses, without a thought for the young couple embarking on the new and somewhat precarious craft of married life on to the uncharted sea of the future.

(Barbara Cartland, *Jig-Saw*, Duckworth, 1925.)



I've been feeling a trifle idiosyncratic recently. If you have too, you could join the British Idiotic Society, if it still survives. This is far less fun than it sounds, being forced to promote idiosyncrasy and its associated ideals of World Peace through Vegetarianism and Dhammapadam. I do was an artificial language designed to supplement Esperanto (Esp. "ido" equals "son of"). "Idiotic" is unrecorded by OED (can I have a contributor's tie, please?) but is attested by a printed sticker of around 1911, one of the items in an album of idiosyncratic postcards and ephemera, once the property of a Cambridge hotelier, which I have just semi-accidentally acquired.

It appears that the moment the hotelier publicized his adherence to the movement the postcards came flooding in, offering congratulations, requesting the exchange of cards and stamps, and reproaching him for his prose style (which was full of "Esperantoida vortoj"). From France, Germany and outlying portions of Austria-Hungary they came, portraits of Comenius, "our great Bohemian" views of Mala Strana in Prague and Krakow townhall, Janus Hasselquist the Swedish bomb-maker. There is a note of encouragement from Louis Couturat, the mathematical philosopher and architect of ido ("refuter la Esp-isti" - the Esp-isti still regard him as Judas), propaganda postcards showing the ido star or the ido dove shedding respectively light and olive leaves over a battered globe - one card, curiously, bears the stamp of the Stassfurt Volapükklub Zenodid, which suggests that some chapters jumped straight from Volapük to ido without calling at Esperanto on the way. (Volapük was the first of the international languages to become a movement: the trouble with it was that it was extremely ugly, and much harder to learn than any natural language. "O fat obas kel binol in stis" is the start of the Lord's Prayer in Volapük and that is enough about that.)

Through peace and war, peace and war, the idios ploughed on, earnest for peace but with the most minimal influence on history; there are conferences here and there, a photograph of sopia congressists gathered round a waterfall, the sticker of the "Internacia Unio de Vegetariani Idisti", "Venez ad Sopron dum 1930", sheets and sheets of very pretty labels advertising Tobler Sultana Lakto Chokolado, evidence of some

great Schism ("mi sustenas la Programo di Demokratio Opozantaro"). The Crusade against Babel petered out at last, alas. The correspondence thins, and the last postcard, from the vice-president of the English branch, is poignant: "meo quales pri mea old amiki... quale sempre. Idiisti trovas kardial bon-cepto en Lewisham..."

One of the most curious items in the collection is a round-robin postcard, evidently a minor pastime before the First World War. It left Cambridge on the morning of January 12, 1912 with a penny stamp and a minuscule address in Brussels. The Belgian recipient added (on January 14) ten centimes, "kordiale salut" and the address of a friend in Italy, leaving plenty of space for more addresses. From Italy it went to Germany, from Germany to Luxembourg and from Luxembourg, on January 24, it headed back to Cambridge, where we may safely assume the sender received it within two weeks of despatch. Dare one contemplate how much this would cost and how long it would take today, if it was not instantly confiscated as infringing a score of regulations? Of course thanks to the miracles of instantaneous data transfer, geosynchronous satellites and telephone answering machines, you can now ring yourself up and get an answer within minutes...

The reason for the decline in practically everything except international telephone communications is, without a doubt, lack of respect for Values; or to put it another way, that too few members of the industrious classes devote their spare time to acquiring a proper expertise in the rules of precedence and correct deferential address, rules which were in fact designed by an obliging provi-dence to ensure that there is no leisure in a well-conducted state for those twin banes of the Lower Orders, bear-baiting and Political Oeconomy.

In a praiseworthy effort to amend this Messrs Adam and Charles Black have just published the seventh edition of their *Titles and Forms of Address: a Guide to Correct Use*, price £3.95 paperback, and if you think it should have been published not in paper but in full levant morocco extra with gilt strawberry leaves in each corner, then you haven't understood a thing I'm about to say, which is that if you are born to the purple you are born knowing that the daughter of a duke who has married a commoner goes into dinner before her sister who has married a baronet ("No, mumsie, let's wait for Auntie Fie"), and if you are born to less elevated sections of the spectrum then you have to sit down with A & C Black and a pot of strong tea and swot it up.

One thing you have to do is memorize the order of precedence of dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons - Don't Men Everywhere Value Breeding? was what our Mam taught us, emphasizing each capital letter with the stroke of a loofah as she gave us our Saturday night bath in the front parlour. Not that she'd take everything in the book as Gospel, Our Mam; "Husbands take no

style or dignity from their wives", she'd read with a sceptical sniff, "A husband's name or status is not altered in any way by his wife's degrees." So she'd pass her toil-scarred hands through her greying hair, purse her lips, and go on to explain why the 8th Duke of Devonshire's brother's eldest son's brothers became Lord Richard and Lord John Cavendish, while his mother remained Lady Edward Cavendish ("But it should be clearly understood that these privileges cannot be claimed as a right..."). And then she would clear her throat and read her favourite passage: "to help us in our explanation we will create a Duke of Middlesex who is also a Marquess of Huddersfield and Earl of Ramsgate, to name only his principal titles. (Italics Our Mam's). His family name shall be Smith..."

It isn't all as cut and dried as she made it sound those long-ago evenings in the pinner's cottage in Be-bhill. For one thing there is the problem of Dowager Peeresses who prefer to be known by their Christian names - "if this is so she will probably make an announcement in the press". Well that's all right, since any secretary worth her correcting fluid will cut such notices from *The Daily Telegraph* and file them with other being told ("I think you will find that 'Mary, Duchess of Middlesex' is the preferred form, Sir"), but what about younger sons of earls? "The title is never printed on visiting cards, so that without inner knowledge rank is difficult to indicate. It, however, reference to the holder's parentage would be permissible." Something along the lines of "Gissa pint for me mate here Tom Collins whose father is the Earl of Earl's Court".

And did you know that gynae-cologists are treated as surgeons in England and Wales and as doctors in Scotland? Why JP precedes MP? (Because MP is just the voice of the people, but JP is a Royal Appointment.) Why the Master of Ballantrae was so called (their apparent or presumptive to a Scottish viscount)? That Mayors when Ladies are Mr Mayor or - colloquially - Madam Mayor, or Your Worship, but Mayors are never Your Worship except when they are sitting as JPs? That Roman Catholic Archbishops never have territorial titles in official correspondence? That the White Knight is dormant while O Siomhain has been called The Fox since 1527? That Rabbis should be addressed as Rabbi Cohen (not so, Messrs A. and C.; Rabbis Cohen are about as orthodox as Lady Cardinals), Archbishops as Dear Father, Benedic-dines as Dom Harry and Trappists not at all? That when you write letters of learned societies should be in the order of the foundation of the society, "as a general rule", so you need to know if the Playboy Club began before or after the Glas-tonbury and District Flying Saucer Club?

And her comes MacDermot Prince of Coolavin, chief of the fifteen families examined by the Genealogical Office, Dublin Castle; and the Dowager Mrs Mackvickar of Mackvickar; and Deputy High Stewards, and Lords and Lieutenants and Lords-Lieutenant and Vice-Lords (of course) and Ordained Professors and The Most Exalted Order of The Star of India.

I've a great admiration for the editorial efficiency displayed by Mansell, the publishers of the 700-odd volume *National Union Catalogue of Pre-1956 Imprints*, but among a billion catalogue card entries from all over North America, a few black sheep are bound to slip in. I recently bought an obscure English obstetric book, and on looking it up in *NUC* was somewhat taken aback to find printed beneath the bibliographic details, the following words: "Anyone who shells out good bucks for the crap in this catalogue is being royally screwed by us."

... all our simple ideas ... are derived from simple impressions ... which they exactly represent." David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

This, in David Hume's simple and elegant formulation, is the essence of empiricism: all our ideas are but the after-taste, the inner echo of sense impressions. Recent more scholastic versions of empiricism have not really improved on this formulation. The central idea of empiricism can be summed up in a phrase widely and erroneously attributed to Aristotle - there is nothing in the mind which was not first in the senses. The idea that the content of our minds is bounded by the senses seems simple: like other simple ideas, it has revolutionary implications if followed up rigorously. One way of approaching the fashionable doctrine of *structuralism* is to see that it is a denial of the empiricist theory of mind, of this echo or after-taste theory of human ideas.

Hume, with his customary honesty and candour, noticed and reported an exception to his doctrine of the sensory or "impressive" origin of all ideas. He knew of course that "complex" ideas can be arrived at by re-combining simple elements in a way not anticipated by experience; but as long as those simple elements themselves all had an experiential origin, this did not create a problem for him. But there was, he noted, a more fundamental exception to his crucial principle:

Suppose ... a person to have enjoyed his sight for thirty years, and to have become perfectly well acquainted with colours of all kinds, excepting one particular shade of blue ... Let all the different shades of that colour, except that single one, be placed before him, descending gradually from the deepest to the lightest; is it plain that he will perceive a blank where that shade is wanting ...

It was obvious to Hume that such a man would indeed acquire the idea of that Missing Shade of Blue, though he never had the good fortune of experiencing it as an impression; and thus, the central principle on which Hume built the entire edifice of his classical formulation of empiricism, is flawed by one significant counter-example. This evidently did not bother Hume very much; after the candid admission of the exception, he proceeds with the edification of his system with equanimity, and never returns to the problem of the Missing Shade. Evidently he thought that the exception did not matter too much; if our minds can on occasion attain ideas, simply in virtue of their place on continuous spectra between familiar polarities, where most of the other elements in the spectra had indeed appeared in our stream of experience, well that was a minor exception, and one which could be accommodated in his system.

It is of the essence of *structuralism* that it stands Hume on his head. It propounds a theory of the human mind or of comprehension which is the precise inversion of Hume's account. What Hume considered an exception to the main principle of how we construct our mental picture of the world is an exception so minor that it could be innocuously by-passed - is, for *structuralism*, the very norm or paradigm of an intellectual operation; and what for Hume is the norm, is for it an exception which it can scarcely allow at all, and merely exclude with more severity than Hume ever showed towards his exception. The Missing Shade of Blue is not an exception, it is the very model of our relation to things we claim to know. On the other hand, anything beyond the line of the polarities of our sensibility, cannot simply be added to our world as an after-taste.

On this view, it is not the steps, but the geometry and old steps, and be as geometry and old

What is Structuralism?

By Ernest Gellner

... all our simple ideas ... are derived from simple impressions ... which they exactly represent." David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

This is the central idea. Plotinus observed that the eye could not see the sun, were it not sun-like. *Structuralism* is a way of endeavouring to operationalize this cryptic insight, to explore just how a given cognitive system contains the particular range of sensitivities within which "this" or "that" object then becomes possible.

One of the successful precedents which inspired *structuralism* to venture into other fields occurred in phonetics. The range of sounds which contribute towards meaningful speech, the "phonemes" of various languages, is not infinite; and more significantly, it is not random or devoid of principle. It appears that the individual sounds which are the bricks of which language are made, are generated in a relatively simple way from the various contrasts or polarities available to the human ear and throat. Any one given language is unlikely to use all the available polarities; but suppose it uses some number *n* of such contrasts, such as "voiced" and "unvoiced", for instance. Then a "phoneme" in that language, a sound whose replacement or absence would change the identity of the "word" in which it occurs, can be defined as other of each of these *n* binary choices.

It was the success of this account, or something fairly like this, which has inspired emulation in other social and human sciences. Note what it was that the linguists were reported as having "discovered" in phonetics: they took properties which could be identified physically - either or physiologically - properties of sounds or of their relation to the human ear - and showed how, out of these neutral, "scientific" elements, available as it were in inter-cultural space, the actual language-sensitivities of various cultures and languages (which of course do not all of them have the same phonemes) can be built up. Thus the mystery of the "generation" of cultural elements from pre-cultural raw materials is laid bare.

Phonetics is not the only sphere which sets a precedent for *structuralism*. The spirit of modern logic is similar. At the beginning of the century, it was still Cartesian: the aspiration was to locate and formulate firm premises, on which a safe edifice could be erected; in science, which would not need to retrace its steps, and be as geometry and old

logic had once been thought to be. This aspiration is gone; instead, systems are erected with a view to exploring what a given set of starting-points and rules can engender, what may or may not occur within it, and how much the actual inferences made by mathematicians and others can be mapped on it. The "generative" revolution in linguistics in a broader sense is of course inspired by a similar image: hypothetical systems of "deep grammar" and "transformation rules" are invented, with a view to exploring whether what they can engender corresponds to the actual wealth and limits of what is intuitively acceptable in a given language. In other words, *structuralism* is either inspired by or part of a wider movement or state of mind, with a shared deep image of how human and social phenomena are to be approached.

A word of qualification: I have approached *structuralism* by way of highlighting its contrast to empiricism. This might give a false impression. The aspect of empiricism which is most present to the mind of the educated *homme moyen sensuel* is its cognitive put-tanism, its insistence that man should remain within the bounds of the human; not so much that he is the measure of all things, but that he must be content with the human measure of himself and everything. *Structuralism* is not really opposed to this isolationist aspect of empiricism; it does not issue exit visas to the transcendent, at most it promises access to a hidden *human* core, rather than a transcendent Other. It was not inspired by some quest of the Other, nor offended by the empiricist denial of the Other. That question does not raise its head. Its quarrel with empiricism is, in this sense, a quarrel between fellow-isolationists, fellow adherents of the view that the proper study of mankind is man.

But this point brings out the important way in which *structuralism* is an ancestor of the *structuralist*. He also abjured the transcendent, and castigated all hopes of a leave-pass to the Other. His quarrel with Hume was roughly the same: that of *structuralism* with empiricism: he insisted that an important part of our mental content was generated, in an orderly and predictable way, by the very structure of the human mind, rather than arriving as an echo of experience. (In a quiet kind of way, even his deity was really made by the human mind, though this did not preclude some rather uncheckable correspondence between the mind-made deity and the fatuous "categories" (though not to them alone) which guided, organized, and pervaded the ordinary ideas; ordinary humble ideas might well (but for their as it were *encadrement* by the categories) be merely the after-tastes of sensations, as Hume had claimed. Modern *structuralism* is not so selective and elitist. They look for the traces of the work of our generative sensibility everywhere, amongst the humblest of us, as well as the most elevated; and sometimes quite especially amongst the humble, obscure, seemingly trivial. Where an old-fashioned, snobbish investigator might throw himself on the

royal or divine decrees of a society, a *structuralist* will also look at the menu of its paupers.

Connected with this is a difference concerning the issue of whether these structures are One or Many. Kant obviously thought that all human minds (perhaps all rational spirits) were endowed with the very same basic structure. This meshed in with his conceptual elitism: it is only too obvious that cultures differ in their mythologies, gastronomies, sartorial habits and so forth. All the more reason for not seeking, in those spheres (or at least in their concrete details), evidence of our shared, universal deep mental structure. By contrast, our latter-day *structuralists* feel very much at home in those culturally differential nuances and details. The idea of a universal generic human mind is not entirely absent from their work and is on occasion alluded to, and it is of course explicitly present in the work of Chomsky. Nevertheless, especially in anthropology, they seek structures, rather than one universal structure.

Finally there is a difference of motive. Kant's interest in the question of how we know (to which he gave a *structuralist* answer) was inspired by the desire to establish just what we did and did not know, to underwrite that which, in his view, we really did know, and to neutralize the lure of that which we could not know. This epistemological motive is largely absent in contemporary *structuralism*. They want to know how we know, and how we construct our world, simply because they want to know just that, for its own sake, not as a means to something else. Their execution of the programme may

sometimes fall short of Kant's, as we shall see; but their aim is more forthright and direct.

Social anthropology as practised in the intellectual Sterling Zone since the First World War is a reasonably homogeneous discipline, with a common style, tradition and criteria, facilitating comparison and the accumulation of knowledge. It began when Malinowski replaced Frazer as the paradigmatic anthropologist. The practitioners form a cohesive guild, whose code was initially set down by Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. The achievements of this school are impressive, and the intellectual empire which they and their disciples, the disciples of their disciples, have left behind, is larger than the political Empire of which it was once the shadow, which it has survived, and of which it was sometimes unfairly considered to be the servant.

If one were asked to single out one conceptual distinction which marks the members of this remarkable school (whose basic style of thought has survived to this day, notwithstanding the flirtations of some of its members with other schools), then I think that without serious doubt the distinction to be singled out would be that between Structure and Culture. The pervasive use of this opposition owes more to Radcliffe-Brown than it does to Malinowski. I shall not attempt any formal definition of this distinction, but shall instead try to convey its spirit.

There are aspects of life which are real and earnest. The survival and maintenance of a human

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group, in the face of external threats and inner conflicts, the definition and defence of external boundaries, the internal maintenance of order, the securing of provisions, the allocation of brides, the training of the young - these are very serious matters. Indeed, if failure occurs in these fields, the entire group may well fail to survive. The effective performance of these tasks requires the setting up of different rules, of subcategories of human beings within the total group, each with its special rights and duties whose fulfilment contributes to the perpetuation of the group. This internal division of labour constitutes the structure of a society.

But we have not exhausted the life of a community when we have described its structure. To re-employ a pun once used by the late Maurice Freedman in the title of a lecture, there are not merely rights and duties, there are also *rites and values*. The different positions of individuals and categories of individuals is signalled, in a given society, by what they wear, how they talk, what they eat, where they sit or stand on given occasions, etc. This accumulation of such rites or signals also forms a system. This is the *culture* of a society. Roughly speaking, one might put it this way: structure determines the choice of a bride, culture determines what the bride wears.

The "British" anthropological tradition was specially concerned with structure. It has been suggested that this may be connected with the widespread use of indirect rule in the British Empire, which made the political and social structure of governed communities of great practical concern (by contrast with, say, the situation in the United States, where the recording of Red Indian culture may have been a more acute preoccupation than the utilization of their structure for administrative ends). To put it in the crudest and somewhat male-chauvinist way, structure is related to the serious concerns of production, politics, defence, and the supernatural when it really impinges on social life; culture is closer to the preoccupations of the home, the barber, the dressmaker.

It is not denied that the two spheres are interrelated. Stendhal observed of early nineteenth-century warfare, that military science was closely related to that of the tailor. That's just the point. One glance by an expert at a uniform of the time could tell him

the rank, unit, specialism, and perhaps the ethnic affiliation and social standing of the wearer. And precisely this was the interest taken in the cultural system by traditional, bloody, commensal structuralists (not to be confused with our latter-day *structuralists*): culture was a system of signals conveying the ritual, economic, political ranking and grouping of individuals. This might be called old-fashioned structuralism. Culture wasn't exactly ignored or despised, but it did have just a touch of the epiphenomenal about it.

There is a striking analogy between this kind of structuralism and the old distinction in philosophy (abandoned there but continuing to haunt ordinary thought) between Primary and Secondary Qualities. The former, like location and impenetrability, really characterize things; the latter, like colour or warmth, are merely the signals induced in a given sensibility by an object, but not "really" parts of the object: to a different sensibility, the same object may well signal its presence by quite a different sound or colour. So it is with structure and culture. Structure is solidly there and similar structures are found in diverse places; culture is produced or elicited from the sensibilities of observers or participants.

It was no accident that this approach was combined with the aspiration to make anthropology into a kind of natural science of societies - and also with a markedly ahistorical approach. Structure (in this sense) would, it was hoped, be amenable to generalization, comparison and orderly explanation. Not so much was to be expected from culture. It was part of the structure of society that certain categories of men were eligible for certain posts, but it was not for certain categories of brides, and so forth; but it was merely a matter of history or accident (if indeed these could ever be distinguished) why such and such a status or position was indicated by this or that sartorial, behavioural or other marker. The location and distribution of markers seemed eligible to understanding the choice of tokens for markers did not.

I may have exaggerated the implicitly dismissive attitude to culture contained in this approach, but in some measure or another it was there, and was implicit in the style of analysis employed by the school. We have here what is in effect an Echo or Signal theory of culture.

Now the echo theory of culture, implicitly contained in old-fashioned, male-chauvinist-pig structuralism, is not exactly identical or identifiable with the echo theory of thought and knowledge found in Hume and transmitted by him to a large part of the empiricist tradition. In the one case, there is an echo theory of all of our ideas, deriving them from antecedent experiences; and in the other, there is an echo theory of cultural signals (in other words, a sub-class of our working ideas) explaining their role and importance (but not the choice of tokens) in terms of the system of important sub-groupings and roles in a given society. The one theory is genetic, and purports to explain how we come by all our ideas; the other in a sense abjures genetic explanations altogether, and is instead functional explaining the signalmarkers in terms of their role. It tends to be agnostic about the question of how we came by particular elements in our stock of cultural signals, but purports to explain only why they have the importance they have, in terms of the function (boundary-marking of sub-groups and status) which they perform in society, and which would have to be performed by some other set of tokens if this lot were not available.

But while the theories are by no means identical, they seem to be very similar in spirit. There is a marked whiff of reductionism about both. Radical empiricism, the after-taste or after-sense theory of ideas, offends those who like to endow ideas with a Platonic reality (whether in order to make mathematics a matter of discovery rather than mere construction, or to endow norms and values with a more than human authority, or both); the echo-signal theory of culture offends those who take their culture with becoming seriousness. If the old bloody commensal structuralism is right, then, to put it bluntly, the status of the Arts Council is strictly comparable to, say, that department of the Greater London Council responsible for cleaning and maintaining public sign-posts: important, of course, most praiseworthy indeed, for it would be a shame if the Gents and Ladies signs became so dirty as to be illegible - but when all is said and done, not really central to our life. Culture becomes (literally) etiquette, or a set of labels which will tell us what is what, but does not greatly affect that which it labels.

So old-fashioned structuralism could hardly appeal to those who

take culture seriously. I am not suggesting that old-fashioned structural-functional anthropologists were a pack of philistines. This is not so, and it can easily be shown to be false: their houses and apartments often bulge with carvings and objects often collected from their field areas. The point of this is something quite different: old-fashioned structuralism simply was not suitable for export into fields which, almost by definition, only deal with cultural products (for instance, Eng Lit). What practitioners of such a subject was eager to say, by way of definition or legitimization of his pursuit, that he treated of a system of signals, which in virtue of historical accidents, beyond the reach of any rational explanation, happened to be used by the members of a given speech or cultural community to indicate their differences or rank? They did not much care to see themselves as a pack of glorified signpost-painters (though to provide over the mysteries of how an entire culture is generated, that would be a different kettle of fish altogether). No, no, the prospects of exporting the old structuralism to other departments, of colonizing the faculties of humanities, were distinctly slender.

Not so with *structuralism*. It has had a *success* for in such fields. For it takes culture seriously, and treats it as autonomous. It clearly holds that culture has its reasons of which not only the mind, but also the political structure of a society, know nothing. The system of signs or signs constituting a culture is, in its view, generated by some central force which, whatever it is and wherever it is, is clearly not to be identified with the political or economic organization of the society in question. That much is plain. This also converges with the recently fashionable Parisian idea that theorizing is itself a kind of *praxis* (i.e. intellectuals are as good as workers) and ergo, theorizing is freed both from shame and from the constraint of facts.

All this in effect gives us what I suspect is the best access to the significance of *structuralism*. It is a movement which emerges at the confluence, as it were, of the denial of two related Echo theories - the echo theory of knowledge, and the echo theory of culture. It tries to apply to concrete ethnographic and other materials a "generative" model of culture which is inspired by or parallel to generative models of human cognitive capacities. *Structuralism* takes culture with total seriousness, and is particularly at home in cultural areas such as

mythology, gastronomy, symbolism, literature. There is admittedly one odd man out in the list of typical *structuralist* preoccupations, one which does not fit in with my own notion that *structuralism* is a culture-oriented: that exception is *kinship*. The most distinguished *structuralist* first became famous precisely by his work in this field. But it may or may not be significant that Sir Edmund Leach, in his study of the thought of Lévi-Strauss, singles out kinship precisely as the area in which Lévi-Strauss was least successful.

There is another root of *structuralism* which is worth singling out. It is opposed to empiricism not merely with respect to the echo theory of ideas, but also with respect to the status of explanatory concepts. Empiricism tends to prescribe (trespassing beyond the bounds of experience; hence when explanations involve elements which can never be actually experienced, empiricism tends to treat them as convenient fictions, as pieces of shorthand which essentially sum up patterns of experience, and only seemingly go beyond them. The "covering law" is the essence of explanation; non-experiential terminology is just conceptual devices.

Structuralism is not concerned with challenging this attitude at all along the line. Rather, it exploits the fact that in one particular sphere - the human - this attitude loses its plausibility. When we explain regularities of human conduct in terms of structures which are not directly observable in that conduct, we are far more inclined to think that these structures "really" exist. In other words, we are more inclined to be Realists (in the sense of believing in the real existence of entities not experienced, but postulated by explanatory schemes) with respect to man and society, than we are with respect to nature. The human mind is not just a shorthand term summing up our range of intelligent performances; we are more inclined to think that there really is a structure which generates that range.

This attitude is further encouraged by the failure to find many reliable regularities or "covering laws" in actual human conduct, and the relative success of the "generative" strategy, which does not even try to look for causal order in surface sequences, but endeavours instead to locate the mechanism responsible for the bounds or limits of the surface events. This method works even in spheres actually designed to preclude surface regularities, such as a roulette wheel. Imagine an archaeologist finding a record in an undeciphered language, which is (though he does not know it) the notes kept by a croupier in some prehistoric Monte Carlo. Our archaeologist is a *structuralist*, and he soon identifies the pattern in the notes. He does not know what the entries refer to, but to hell with that - after all, as a *structuralist* he knows that it is not external reference which gives life to a sign, but its place in a generated system. And he soon tumbles to its structure: here is a world of opposed polarities - Red and Black, Odd and Even, Under and Over Sixteen, which combine and recombine in a dramatic manner, thus no doubt reinforcing and confirming the limits of the world of this community. But occasionally the series is interrupted by itself. My mysterious and elusive O which plainly eludes, transcends, sublates and incorporates all the binary tensions in an explosive and precariously unit simultaneously overcoming the oppositions of this world and yet reminding its denizens of their vigour, rather in the manner in which the suspension of logic in rituals and *rites de passage* in our own society help the participant both to escape the limits of his world, and to accept and understand them, etc.

I put all this in to show that I too can write *structuralist* prose and apply it to material, though no doubt not terribly well. But the relevant point is this: the generative model can work even in spheres where the more conventional "covering law" strategy fails

to find anything; and the pursuit of covering law, has not been outstandingly successful in human and social studies. The underlying ontology of the *structuralist* approach - the belief in the reality of persistent explanatory cores - has a plausibility in the human and social fields which it lacks in nature.

If this is what *structuralism* is, if I have correctly identified its own generative core, the central ideas and reactions which engender its surface manifestations, then the question can be asked: What are its merits? What are its possibilities and its limitations? No doubt it is an excellent thing that those who wish to take culture seriously should be granted a charter for doing so; but over and above this we also wish to know whether it also advances our understanding of things.

As a theory of society, or an approach to the study of society, it seems to be seriously marred by a tendency towards a certain idealism. The idea of a generative core freely playing itself out, so to speak, and being allowed to indulge in a free run, in which the range of its possibilities will be actualized, so that we can then reconstruct the core from the visible and actualized range - such an idea is inspired by domains in which constraints are largely absent. But most social domains are not of that kind. I think this can best be conveyed by an imaginary example. Imagine that the following article appears on the financial pages of the press:

The Polish economy is in a state of acute crisis owing to the shortage of L-s, without which it cannot function. The newly patented process for extracting L-s from the Baltic having proved uneconomical, and the Russians having charged excessive prices for the high-yielding L-s from Kazakhstan, the Polish government now places all its hopes on deep drilling in Silesia. If this fails, the Polish government will feel compelled to introduce L-rationing both in the press and in private correspondence. The town council of Lodz has offered a large prize for the most suitable new name for the city.

We know this grim news item to be fictitious. The L-s may not be worth much, but Polish authorities can print as many L-s as they like, without fearing that the resultant inflation will make L-s unusable. The use of phonetic, or alphabetic, tokens is predicated precisely on the assumption that they are almost free, that their use involves virtually no opportunity cost. It is precisely the extreme cheapness of sounds, and marks on paper, which has led to their use for communication. Except for special circumstances, (eg. when composing telegrams), we do not count the cost of marks, for it is negligible. In fact, in speech, production and consumption are indistinguishable; we are already in that blessed state, anticipated and desired by Marx, when the words of the self-expression flow into each other (a cheering thought, I suppose).

Structuralism was inspired by fields (initially, phonetics) where a generative system can, so to speak, play itself out to the full, because of the near-costlessness of its items. But this blessed condition most emphatically does not apply in other areas. Society may use codes but, *pace the structuralists*, it is not itself a code. It is a system operating under considerable constraints not chosen by itself. My fictitious Polish example is based on the fancy that a Polish phoneme should suddenly start to resemble a raw material. But are *structuralists* justified in talking as if a society's use of raw materials resembled its use of phonemes?

Connected with this criticism is the problem of time and stability. The *structuralist* model assumes that there is indeed a persisting core, which can be assumed to be playing itself out (given the assumption, criticized above, that there are no constraints and shortages, inhibiting such free play), and is not very much affected by feedback from events to core. Such an assumption has its plausibility in, for instance, linguistics. Languages change, but slowly,

rather in the way a glacier flows. Despite its flow, a glacier or mountain range treats a place as a static object, and a linguist can do the same with language. Moreover, it is easy to conceive the location for the "deep structure" of a language: in one sense, it can be located in our neuro-physiology. (Though neurophysiologists are as yet a long way from locating it); and in another sense, it can be placed in the ongoing custom of large speech communities. Although these communities have a population turnover, it is very slow in comparison with the fabulously large number of speech acts performed, so that the rules governing those acts can be thought of as subsisting in the mechanisms governing the linguistic behaviour of the community. In brief: the supposition of a persisting core assumes that it is fairly stable, can be located somewhere, and is not constantly affected by surface events.

All these assumptions are highly plausible for language; but they are most implausible for very many human institutions, say political ones. The feedback of many political acts on the underlying political structure is not negligible, but frequently enormous. There is no stable political *langue*, which would only be negligibly transformed by any one use of the political *parole*. This is one further reason for being sceptical of any wholesale transfer of the *structuralist* paradigm from some aspects of social life to all of them. It is precisely the favoured areas of old-fashioned structuralism which are least amenable to *structuralism*. Is it an accident that Lévi-Strauss is alleged to have expressed a lack of interest in political anthropology?

It is this leaning, inherent in the underlying model, towards an idealist assumption of a stable, autonomous mental core, free from cost and constraint and constant change, which makes the *structuralist* Marxist alignment so paradoxical. It is a liaison which inevitably reminds one of the famous story of the head of a very elegant, liberal and enlightened Cambridge college, who was heard to observe at a wedding, with a nod of the head towards the happy couple - I have slept with both of them, and I can recommend neither to the other. Perhaps there are explanations of this bizarre attraction. Marxists have their own quarrel with empiricism, usually referred to these days as positivism, which appears to be the code-name for any attempt to invoke facts against Marxist theses. As all facts are by definition on the surface, their invocation is a shameful defence of the status quo which encourages such superficial and hence harmless research; by contrast, the unmasking of the establishment order can and must only be carried out through an understanding of those deeper and above all more total structures, which however are only accessible through correct theories (which cannot be checked by mere surface facts, etc., though they are available to the right people. In turn selected by the theory itself). This is also known as the Frankfurt/Paris Opening, and there is no known answer to it. In defence of *structuralists*, it must be said that they are not interested in ignoring or denying facts (the main *structuralist* has amassed vast quantities of them), but only in imposing their own explanations on them. But there seems to be an elective affinity between the two trends in their claims to possession of privileged access to the deep. Perhaps there is a mystery; Left-bank *marxisme* is in any case so very crypto-idealist (mystical, autological or both), that its liaison with another idealism ought not to puzzle us.

But our concern is with *structuralism*, and the validity of its deep explanations of the facts with which, admittedly, it does have dealings. Here we come to another worry. Do they really probe deep, do they reach depths other than those of the cultural phenomena which are allegedly being explained? Compare them with the great proto-*structuralists*. Kant thought he could explain the shared formal features of the *Lebenswelt* of all men (which he mistakenly supposed always con-

tained a Platonic core) and the rudiment of development of mind, by going back to a limited number of elements - spatial and temporal sensibility, our capacity to group objects under concepts, to combine concepts in judgments, and the tendency to systematize judgments into systems, patiently pointing to a single apex. Given this, our world followed, he thought. Whether or not he succeeded in establishing this, note that the explanatory elements are few in number, and different in kind from the world explained, and thus the explanation (were it correct) really would get us somewhere.

Or take proto-*structuralist* Durkheim. Unlike Kant, he thought human worlds were only generically, and not specifically, similar. But what they all shared with each other, though not with animals, was the presence of *compulsive concepts*. Like Kant, he *unmasked* moral and conceptual compulsions to each other, thus giving science and morality ultimately the same basis. He thought he could show how our compulsive concepts - and thus our humanity - were engendered by communal ritual. So where the philosopher could only infer or reconstruct the pre-suppositions of our capacity to think, the ethnographer could now actually observe them by joining in the tribal dance. What for Kant was never directly observable became accessible to anthropological fieldwork, if Durkheim was right. Once again, we are not concerned with whether he was successful in the execution of his programme; what matters is that if his argument was correct, it constituted a genuine explanation, by taking us to another level (namely ritual), and explaining something much larger and more complex in terms of its effects. Bertrand Russell derided the social contract theory of language, which would make an assembly of hitherto speechless elders, solemnly agreeing henceforth to call a cow a

"cow". Durkheim by concentrating on mind, formulated a social contract theory of thought and morality which is no means absurd. In again, the phonemians apparently explained the phonemes actually recognized by the members of a given speech community as specimens of alternatives systematically engendered by processes independently identifiable by a culture-free phonetic phonetics.

But is there really any such reaching out to another and genuinely explanatory level in the work of latter-day *structuralists*? What one tends to find in them is the seeking out of polarities, extreme contrasts, from within the wealth of ideas found (say) in the myths and legends of a given society, and the listing of the ways in which these combine and recombine with each other. Given the (to my mind gratuitous) assumption that these sensibilities of ours tend to be binary, this leads to the method which could be called a conceptual beating of Bounds. It is assumed somehow that a given myth will repeatedly bounce against the very limits of the conceptual space of the society, which we then unmask when we de-code the myth. But is there any kind of genuine explanation of the world of a given culture, if we have run around what seem to be the conceptual extremities of its stories? At best, we have indeed described those bounds, or those that are habitually reached by narrators and listeners in the society; but have we explained them? Elements drawn from one level seem to be explained in terms of themselves.

And there is another related worry. Has anyone ever looked up fifty *structuralist* in non-communicating cubicles with the same text, and then compared the independent interpretations, to see whether the same polarities, the same bounds, have been identified? Reading *structuralist* texts, one has the uncomfortable feeling not, as Graham Burchell, I & C, Westminster College, Oxford OX2 9AT),

select which points of reference in an arbitrary manner, or at any rate a manner of which the rules are imposed from above. A distinguished Russian literature expert, now in exile in Paris, was heard to remark that he had acquired a new addiction - to develop *structuralism* with a human face.

These are the worries which *structuralism* is liable to inspire. They do not preclude the possibility of interesting *structuralist* work in some spheres; but they do incline one to caution in accepting *structuralism* as some overall revelation in human and social studies.

The latest (Spring 1981) issue of *Ideology & Consciousness*, "Power and Desire, diagrams of the social", carries a full translation (by Paul Foss and Paul Patton) of *Rhizome*, a short work by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Two articles on Deleuze and Guattari accompany the text. "The subtracting machine" by Colin Gordon, and "Notes on a glossary" by Paul Patton.

Deleuze and Guattari always intended *Rhizome*, first published in 1976, to serve as the introduction to volume two of their monumental (1100-page) work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. It duly appears in *Anti-Oedipus*, the sequel to *Anti-Oedipus*, but so substantially modified as to warrant treating the 1976 version as an independent work meriting separate translation. It provides a useful introduction to the invariably ingenious - if sometimes extremely wild - joint speculations of Deleuze and Guattari, and, in particular, to their sustained attack on the "tree" model of the structure of scientific enquiry: "form rhizomes, and not roots... make a line, never a point... be the Pink Panther, and let your loves be like the wasp and the orchid, the cat and the baboon."

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An anarchist's career

By Alan Ryan

FREDERIC TRAUTMANN:

The Voice of Terror
A Biography of Johann Most
288pp. Greenwood Press. £14.50.
0 313 22053 0

The career of Johann Most is evidently an exemplary tale — but what the moral might be is a great deal less clear. His ill-treatment by American judges and juries suggests that the moral is that the land of the free has never had much time for real libertarians; the rise and fall of his influence among European immigrants to America suggests that the moral is that the appeal of anarchism to anyone but the uprooted and alien was never great, that all forms of socialism stood little chance against capitalism with a democratic face, and that anarcho-revolutionary communism stood none at all. The simplicity and repetitiveness of Most's doctrines — little more than the cry that inequality was sustained by force and might legitimately be overthrown by force, whereafter loosely federated groups would freely negotiate their own futures — suggest that the moral is that the Marxists were quite right to sneer at unscientific socialism. His personal circumstances, however, suggest that the moral is that political extremism may indeed be the public expression of personal wounds.

From Frederic Trautmann's account of Most's career, you might draw any, or all, or none of these morals. Indeed, from Professor Trautmann's account you might find it difficult to draw any conclusions whatever or even to form a consecutive impression of what Most's career actually was. Even the jacket of the book is infected with the chaotic impression created by Trautmann's business style; the jacket remarks that one of Most's stays in jail was the result of his praising the assassination of President McKinley in an editorial in

Freiheit, whereas the book itself is at some pains to demonstrate that it was by the sheerest bad luck that Most happened to reprint an article by Karl Heinzen on the virtues of tyrannicide in an issue which appeared on the day of the murder; it is precisely this which makes the behaviour of the police and judiciary so obviously unjust and vindictive.

It is perhaps unkind to complain of Trautmann's offering us an anarchic account of an anarchist's career; he is a professor of speech, not a philosopher, historian or political scientist, and has no doubt tried to give his readers a vivid picture of his hero. And it must be said that we are in his debt for the book — there has been no English biography of Most, and Trautmann has done an extremely good job of searching out a controversial literature, written in German and published in America, which is quite unknown to all but a handful of specialists. All the same, it is hard not to feel that a tidier and more consecutive account of what Most did, what he thought and why he thought it would have been a lot more useful. After all, what the average curious reader will know about Most is that he was excessively optimistic about the possibilities of dynamite, and that he thought that terrorism against the rich and powerful would bring capitalism crashing down.

The title of his most famous book reinforces the popular impression: *Revolutionäre Kriegswissenschaft: Ein Handbuch zur Anleitung betreffend Gebrauches und Herstellung von Nitroglycerin, Dynamit, Schussbaumwolle, Knallpulver, Bomben, Brandstifter, Giften u.s.w.* It is no good Trautmann trying to defend Most against the mockery of Bismarck (who picked up the anarchist's cookbook in the Reichstag and simply roared with laughter) by pointing out that you really can kill people by blowing them up. Nobody denies that; what they deny is that terrorism will make a dent on a really determined state, or that what terrorism will achieve will be anarchy rather than more repression. What is needed is either some explanation of why, in the context, the cry for terrorism was stronger than it looks, or why the case for terrorism

was less central to this brand of anarchism than the popular impression has it. It is not quite true that Trautmann gives us nothing along these lines, but he gives us nothing systematic.

Most's career would in any event almost defy careful telling. His life was a hand-to-mouth, go-to-go and place-to-place one, with emotional and financial and political disaster never more than a step away. He was born in Augsburg in 1846; he lost his mother at the age of ten and acquired a savage stepmother; among his schoolmasters, one was sufficiently sadistic to be identified as insane; religion and authority became natural targets for ridicule and revolt. At twelve he became an apprentice bookbinder, and at seventeen set out to see if life was better elsewhere. By the time he was twenty-five he had been gaoled for high treason in Austria and then exiled. Back in Germany, he alternated between increasingly influential work in the Social Democratic party and periods in prison; the passing of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1878 drove him out of Germany for good. Three years in England was enough to get him gaoled for an article applauding the assassination of Alexander II; so in 1882 he left for America, where he lived until his death in 1906.

His fortunes rose and fell with those of the socialist left generally, and his liberty was cut short each time there was a Red Scare. After the Haymarket riot in 1887, and after the shooting of McKinley, he was gaoled for a year on Blackwell's Island; after Alexander Berkman's attempt on Henry Frick, however, nothing worse befell him than a horse-whipping from Emma Goldman — he and Berkman had both been her lovers, but Most had denounced the attempted assassination in *Freiheit*. It was a career which, not surprisingly, was agreed by both enemies and supporters to be extremely "picturesque"; whether it was anything more than that it would need a more orthodox treatment than Professor Trautmann's to decide. But for lovers of the picturesque — especially in its more Gothic and disordered forms — *The Voice of Terror* will do well enough.

Crime and recrimination

By Erik de Mauny

ALFRED ERICH SENN:

Assassination in Switzerland
The Murder of Vatslav Vorovsky
219pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £21.50.
0 299 08530 3

At mid-evening on Ascension Thursday, May 10, 1923, a Soviet career diplomat called Vatslav Vorovsky was dining with two colleagues at the Hotel Cecil in Lausanne, where he had arrived two weeks earlier to represent the Soviet Government at the Peace Conference on the Near East. The three men were immersed in a lively conversation when a stranger walked over from a nearby table, pulled out a gun, and with a cry of "That's for the Communists!" fired at Vorovsky at point-blank range, killing him instantly. As Vorovsky's companions tried to tackle the assailant, he fired several more shots, wounding them both. He then surrendered his gun to the head waiter, and allowed himself to be led into the hotel lobby, where he waited patiently, even cheerfully, for the police to arrive, telling anyone who would listen that he had fired on the Russians in order to avenge the deaths of his father and his uncle under the Bolshevik regime. He turned out, furthermore, that Conrad had not acted entirely on his own, but, through the Russian Red Cross in Geneva, had been in close contact with another émigré White officer, Arcadius (Arkadi) Polunin, who had given him both moral encouragement and financial help. Polunin had, in fact, been arrested as an accomplice to the murder. But the Soviet authorities suspected that he and Conrad were merely the visible instruments of a much wider conspiracy.

It was thus inevitable that when the trial opened in the Lausanne Court in early November 1923 its

determination to kill a Bolshevik leader. At any other time, personal vengeance might have seemed a sufficient motive for Conrad's action. But May 1923 was a time of peculiar stress in relations between the Soviet Government and the Western powers. With Lenin incapacitated by a stroke, the Soviet leadership itself seemed uncertain of its direction. One to one hand, it was cautiously trying to establish normal relations with Western governments. On the other, it saw recurring spectres of renewed imperialist intervention. It was only two days before the murder of Vorovsky that Lord Curzon had issued his celebrated ultimatum to the Soviet leaders, complaining of various Soviet activities, and threatening to break off relations between the two governments. In Soviet eyes, the murder of Vorovsky looked very much like a sinister new element in an orchestrated campaign against the Soviet regime. The Soviet authorities including the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Chicherin, were already incensed with the Swiss Government for failing to give Vorovsky proper accreditation to the Lausanne Conference. It turned out, furthermore, that Conrad had not acted entirely on his own, but, through the Russian Red Cross in Geneva, had been in close contact with another émigré White officer, Arcadius (Arkadi) Polunin, who had given him both moral encouragement and financial help. Polunin had, in fact, been arrested as an accomplice to the murder. But the Soviet authorities suspected that he and Conrad were merely the visible instruments of a much wider conspiracy.

Alfred Erich Senn is an acknowledged authority on Soviet-Swiss relations and on the role of Russian émigrés in Switzerland. The subject of this study is admittedly a footnote to history, and much though Conrad longed to provoke a new anti-Bolshevik campaign, his action in Lausanne remained limited in its consequences. It continued, however, to provoke recriminations between Moscow and the Swiss Confederation for nearly a quarter of a century: it was not until 1946 that the two governments finally agreed to establish diplomatic relations.

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Paradise rationalized

By Robin Robbins

ANDREW MILNER:

John Milton and the English Revolution
A Study in the Sociology of Literature
248pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 27134 3

Cries the stall-reader: "Bless us! A book on Milton, spattered with such terms as 'bourgeois' and 'capitalism'! Anathema!" and totters back to the Common Room for a stiffener. His leaving is his loss: a carefully conceived and justified study of the relation of Milton's philosophy, beliefs and values to those predominant in his society, and their influence on and expression through his works. Though Andrew Milner takes as his starting-point the Marxist dicta that literary production is dependent on extra-literary realities, and that economic factors play a special role in the determination of the nature of a society, he does nothing so crude as to set up philosophical or sociological criteria, let alone political orthodoxy, as standards of literary worth. He also eschews the vulgar fallacy of regarding literature as a product solely of collective forces: "*Paradise Lost* was, after all, written by John Milton, and not by a select committee of defeated Protestant revolutionaries."

Marx and Engels (and Raymond Williams) are quoted to make clear that from the beginning intelligent Marxists, while denouncing (too sweepingly) "the abistorical idealism characteristic of literary-critical orthodoxy", were not positing instead a simplistic economic determinism. Nevertheless, they provided no comprehensively worked-out theory of literature: for this Milner turns to the genetic structuralism of Goldmann in his earlier work, for whom (reductively, one may object) "comprehension is the bringing to light of a significant structure immanent in the object studied".

For the sociologist of literature (and, to avoid false expectations, that it must be remembered, not literary scholar or critic) is Andrew Milner's declared function: who sets out to compare the internal structures of literary works with the social structures which he presumes to have given rise to them, Goldmann provides a theory of mediation. Adopting this, Milner looks not for

a direct structural homology between individual works of literature and the nature of social reality, but rather a set of structural homologies between, on the one hand, the individual work of literature and the world vision of the social class to which the writer belongs, and on the other, that world vision and the real social life of the times.

The social class to which Milton belonged Milner defines, unsurprisingly, as the bourgeoisie, and the world vision produced in that class during the revolutionary period as the rationalist one. He sees two stages in its development, one triumphant, as its programme seemed victorious, one problematically embattled, after the failure of the Interregnum. Central to this rationalism was an emphasis on the supremacy of the discrete individual, in religious terms on private interpretation of the Bible. The other rationalist priority was freedom, both external political liberty as sought by the Independents and (what distinguished them and Milton from other radicals such as Ranters and Levellers) internal freedom of reason from dominance by passion, which alone qualified men for external freedom.

Milton's clear espousal of the radical opposition of reason to passion which is fundamental to rationalism is in itself sufficient rebuttal of the sloppy conception of him as some sort of proto-Romantic. More precisely, Milner takes pains to distinguish rationalism, which saw knowledge as internally constructed by the active mind, from the empiricism which in England largely succeeded it and viewed the mind rather as a passive recipient of sense-impressions. Not only does Milton

reject feudal deference to authority (even that of the Bible, where it appears incompatible with reason): he puts no faith in "the weak and fallible office of the senses".

For Milner, Milton's philosophical position corresponds to the historical position of his class, defined according to Goldmann: rationalism suits the bourgeois class criticizing feudal dominance and proposing a new order; empiricism suits bourgeois apologetics for the status quo in a dominant bourgeois society. *Comus* is shown to contain, as well as the obvious central opposition of the constant, rational, individual mind to unstable irrational passion, the external conflict in Milton's society. "The Lady's proposal for a just distribution of wealth is that of one sort of Puritan revolutionary. Equally clearly, *Comus*'s values are those associated with the Cavaliers (and notably expressed by Carew in "A Rapture"). He is made to represent conservatism in yet another respect: Milner points out that "The *Comus* who stands for 'rites and custom laws against 'mere moral bubble' speaks the language of Archbishop Laud".

The issue of sexual temperance in *Comus* is, of course, only part of the overall conflict between reason and passion which in turn is only one constituent of Milton's all-embracing rationalist philosophy. Over a decade later, in "I did but prompt the age to quit their cloths", the political aspect is uppermost, with Milton making true liberty conditional upon knowledge of truth, wisdom, and virtue. Milner (justifiably) makes much of Michael's explanation in the last book of *Paradise Lost* of why divine justice permitted Nimrod to inaugurate monarchy:

Yet sometimes nations will decline so low
From virtue, which is reason, that no
But justice, and some, like him, will
Deprives them of their outward liberty.
Their inward lost.

Thirty years after writing *Comus*, Milner is arguing on a much broader — indeed a cosmic — front that individual men and nations receive what they deserve, and that what they deserve is judged against a scale on which passion ranks lowest, and reason supreme.

In Milton this doctrine of reward and punishment goes far beyond that of traditional Christianity. As Milner points out, Milton is a meritocrat from top to bottom: in Heaven the Son is elevated to the right hand of God "By merit more than birthright"; in Hell Satan is "by merit raised" to the infernal throne. Milton is not a democrat in either a seventeenth-century or a modern sense, and thus, for all his radical independence, not to be identified with the Levellers. In Milner's words, "Bourgeois rationalism challenges the illegitimacy of the hereditary basis of feudalism, but rather its non-meritocratic basis". He goes on to point out the inadequacy of "C. S. Lewis's suggestion that the central principles upon which *Paradise Lost* is based are those of obedience and hierarchy" — the problem for the critic, whether approaching from a socio-political angle or not, is what sort of hierarchy it displays.

Milner attributes the perception that the Fall was not a matter simply of disobedience but essentially "the triumph of passion over reason" to Saurat's study of 1924. It is, of course, as old as St Gregory, followed by standard commentators such as Pererius, and in any case Eve would have been saved from the weakness of her reason by obedience. But Milner's development of this perception does much to explain the coldness, aridity and colourlessness of Milton's God. Extreme Protestant rationalism, expressed in *De Doctrina Christiana*, made the reasoning power of the individual paramount, even over the word of Scripture, and thus the only acknowledged medium of the divine presence in the world. This tended to abolish the separation between man and God essential to the latter's distinct existence. Given the asseveration of

the freedom of the human will in *Paradise Lost*, God, though omniscient, is reduced after his first causation of existence to the rule of a spectator. The consequence is that in *Paradise Lost* we have not the actively participant, anthropomorphic figure of Genesis — "Rather he is abstract reason itself". (Milner might profitably have seized on the use of the word "if" — extraordinary for an omniscient being — in ll. 117.) God the Father turned a school divine is not a recent notion, but Milner seems right to argue that Milton's God, rather than a backward-looking feudal concept, emulating Aquinas while demanding unthinking obedience, is the product of a rationalism which, carried to the end (much further than Milton took it), is atheistic. He is almost rationalized and abstracted out of existence.

Whereas other participants in the story, not only Satan, Adam, and Eve, but even angels and lesser devils, are endowed, as one would expect from a writer who is a Protestant individualist (and, what Milton ignores, a successor of Shakespeare), with memorable personality, it is hardly more possible, for doctrinal reasons, for God to exist as a person than it is for Milton's Holy Spirit.

The political historian's approach to *Paradise Regained* produces the thesis that the characteristic tone of the poem is due to fatigue not in the individual poet but in the revolutionary movement. In the three temptations Milner sees Milton as treating of two issues. Having disposed in the first of the expected conflict between reason and passion, he turns in the second with the encomiums to liberate God's people and dethrone the libertine ruler, to an assessment of the relative merits of both quietistic and activist responses to political oppression. Milner attributes the victory of quietism here to a depressing recognition of the successful repression of dissent after the Restoration. The third temptation he sees as merely an enactment of the divine supremacy proved in the first two.

Milner's critique of *Samson Agonistes* is, compared to the rest of his book, pedestrian. Though he does indubitably advocate political action, the securing of external freedom by one who has recovered his internal freedom, his wisdom and his virtue, the argument that this represents a regaining by Milton of his earlier conviction and rationalist optimism, fostered by the contentions of the late 1660s, depends crucially on the date of composition. The dispute over this date is evaded by Milner, except for the unimportant, theoretical and easily disposed-of arguments of R. W. Condon. To assert that "The movement from quietism to activism in English radical thought as a whole clearly suggests a parallel movement in Milton's own thought, and we are thus led to the conclusion that the composition of *Samson Agonistes* must postdate that of both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*" begs large questions. All its persuasive force inheres in the words "suggests" and "must" — no more force, that is, than in the possible counter-assertion that the optimistic activism and triumph over a seemingly disastrous disability fit Milton's circumstances in the 1650s.

Perhaps it is the strain of twisting recalcitrant materials to fit his thesis that makes Milner lapse into such insupportable assertions as that, "tormented, we are told, with 'restless thoughts', with reproaches of God, with his present sufferings, and with self-criticism, 'Samson appears, then, at the very beginning of the poem; in precisely that pose of repentant obedience and patient quietism which had previously, in *Paradise Regained*, appeared to Milton as the only possible response to the defeat of reason". This is rubbish. "Abistorical idealism" of literary critics, his judgment of the closing lines — "that effect of consolation and reassurance... is alien to the tradition of classical Greek tragedy" — betrays ignorance of *Oedipus at Colonus*.

It is perhaps too much to demand that someone who has read much in

politics, sociology and critical theory should possess a wide knowledge of imaginative literature. Yet an awareness of this limitation can be expected, and should have prevented such superficial wrong-headedness as "Who, after all, apart from professional scholars, today reads *L'Allegro* or *Il Penseroso*?" (more common readers, most of us would wager, than tackle *Paradise Regained*); or, on *Samson Agonistes* not being intended for the stage: "Milton no doubt shared in this common Puritan prejudice against the dramatic form" (apart from his admiration of Shakespeare and Jonson, and his writing of *Comus*, if *Samson Agonistes* was written before the Restoration, there were no theatres open to write for; if after, it would hardly have suited the current appetite for heroic extravaganzas and libertine comedy).

It is not only in the primary literature that Milner's reading seems parochial. The literary critics of whom he rather easily disposes (or as easily follows) are for the most part such as appeared on undergraduate reading-lists twenty years ago.

More damaging is a tendency simply to disregard what does not neatly fit the argument. Of Milton's words in the *De Doctrina*, "if any law or custom be contrary to the law of God, of nature, or of reason, it ought to be looked upon as null and void", Milner asserts "It is not the written law, then, but rather the unwritten law of reason which is paramount": not only orthodox theologians and jurists, but probably Milton himself would have been displeased by this slight telescoping of the law of God and Natural Law into the reason by which they may be known, whatever supremacy as arbiter is accorded to the last. Later Milner claims that in arguing "God and Nature bid the same" Abdiel asserts "that God and Nature are essentially one": though on the following page we are reminded that Milton believed in a "God who is reason, law, and truth". Agreement among entities is not identity. In fact the confusion of God and Nature is one of *Comus*'s sophistries.

Because Milner is trying to synthesize a world-vision for Milton, he is ready to swallow the rationalization in *De Doctrina* of the tracts on divorce, education and censorship as planned parts of a libertarian programme. The historian who sees more than coincidence between historical events and the later poems should surely see more than coincidence between these pamphlets and Milton's marital difficulties, meeting Samuel Hartlib, and troubles with censorship.

For such judicious scepticism we may turn to Christopher Hill's *Milton and the English Revolution*, which, moreover, devotes an appendix to the problematic dating of *Samson Agonistes*. According to Milner, his own work was complete when Hill's appeared in 1977. Consequently, he initiates comparison only in a final fifteen-page note. Here he criticizes Hill's account of the politics of the revolutionary period as cursory, in that it fails to distinguish between Independents and more radical allies such as the Levellers. Thus, according to Milner, Hill's "third culture" "collapses into two opposed political groupings which opposed each other (in the debates) at Putney and later (in the Leveller mutiny) at Burford". Milner also accuses Hill of comparing partial aspects of the content of Milton's works of others and of historical events. In contrast, Milner claims to analyse and reconstitute Milton's world vision as a totality.

Nevertheless, even if one does not in the end accept Hill's synthesis, his literary acumen is sharper, his scope far wider, his documentation more thorough than Milner's, so that, albeit by the way, one learns more from the earlier book about the seventeenth-century context of Milton's ideas. Milner's narrow sociological and structuralist viewpoint is both a strength and a limitation: while encouraging claims to greater importance than they possess, it does afford clearly defined and thought-provoking insights into Milton as thinker and revolutionary, if not as a poet.

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Bar-room bluster

By John Lucas

Kavanagh's Weekly
A Journal of Literature and Politics
Goldenhill Press, Marlinstown Rd.
The Curragh, Co. Kildare. £20
(paperback, £12).
0 904984 621

Kavanagh's Weekly, the title is something of a misnomer, and not merely because others wrote for it during its brief, thirteen-week life. (They include Myles na Gcopaleen.) Shift the apostrophe behind the s and you have a more accurate picture of those responsible for the paper: for its contents and its appearance. In its introduction to the present edition Peter Kavanagh writes that "Patrick's genius alone illuminates each page." Yet the fact is that it was Peter's money - some £2,000 of it - which made publication possible in the first place, and it was Peter who acted as publisher, and for good measure he wrote many of the 10,000 words necessary for each of the weekly parts, including all the pieces on America, which appeared under the name of John L. Flannigan. It is modest about his own role if he because the *tone* of *Kavanagh's*

Weekly was largely determined by Patrick. For it is certainly the case that the columns written by Peter exhibit the same kind of parochial in-fighting and range of bar-room insults that characterize Patrick's journalism; and *Kavanagh's Weekly* is, I think, mostly a matter of tone, one set by such remarks as "Mr Austin Clarke, the reviewer".

Reading through the pages of the Weekly, you can see why it created something of a stir in Dublin when it first appeared. It has about it a brash, school-boyish, nose-thumping humour; and if you happened to be part of the world it thumped away at you might have felt hurt by one of its more accurate blows. But which were they? At this distance it is almost impossible to tell, and to be honest it is not clear why the paper should have been thought worthy of reprinting. For the truth is that by and large *Kavanagh's Weekly* is poor stuff. It is often badly written - no doubt the need to meet deadlines explains, though it does not excuse, much of this; and it is stuffed out with the kind of dreary and opinionated nonsense, of which the following is a typical example:

Women are wise in their generation and in their instincts. If they when they abandon their perceiving bodies for their soon dried up

brains they become intolerable. The body with its feelings, its instincts, provides women with a source of wisdom but they lack the analytic detachment to exploit [sic] it in literature. The great writer is the man who has in him some of this feminine capacity for perceiving with the body. This femininity, however, is not to be confused with homosexuality though it often looks like a tendency in that direction.

Anyone who listened in on the semi-drunk saloon-bar chat of literary London in the 1950s will be in a good position to recognize that behind such drivel lies the inevitable, slurred appeal to quotations from, among others, Donne ("one might almost say, her body thought") and Baudelaire, (O femme dangereuse, O solitaire chimiste?). But that does not make it any the less drivel.

Kavanagh's Weekly was perhaps predominantly concerned with Dublin politics. But this is of no great interest unless one can understand such politics in their context. It is a major criticism of this facsimile edition that it provides no annotation whatsoever, which means that a good deal of the paper's polemic is virtually pointless. To say this is not to deny one can gain an occasional insight into the way in which Patrick

Kavanagh was, or felt himself to be, or was prepared to project himself as, the rogue outsider, totally at odds with those Irish orthodoxes which he saw as standing in the way of his own chance of recognition. In the tenth number, for example, there is an attack on the Irish bourgeoisie, which according to Kavanagh

is the enemy of every fine and enlarging idea. That class has got a tremendous grip on the Twenty-six Counties; in Dublin they operate almost as a secret society; they are interlocked among the directorates of various large societies; touch one and you touch them all.

This bourgeoisie is almost entirely the creation of that noted American, Eamon de Valera. Behind his great black clerical cloak they operate. They have power and they are very charming. They are in a vague way supporters of the Arts. They are afraid of nothing for they know that they have the money and can control all thought by shutting out from the sources of money anyone who might look like exposing them.

There can be no doubt that in that final sentence Kavanagh is thinking

of himself. What one therefore expects is something in the way of exposure, some naming of names. But it never comes. And this is what is finally so disappointing about the paper. It simply isn't precise enough, it lacks a flair for the actual. Leave aside the slap-happy attacks on such sacred cows as De Valera, Parnell and the Church, and more or less all that remains is bluster. *Kavanagh's Weekly* falls remarkably short of the mark when it comes to the kinds of facts which are the essence of good journalism. Indeed, it is short of any facts. The pieces with most meat on them are those which Peter Kavanagh wrote about the goings-on of the Irish in America, but although they remind one of the fact that Irish-American is an important cultural phenomenon, they none the less seem marginal to what surely ought to have been the paper's main concern: to provide detailed information about political and cultural affairs in Dublin. Unfortunately, *Kavanagh's Weekly* lacks a sense of detail.

It also lacks good poems. Several of those printed in its pages - either over Patrick Kavanagh's own name or over various pseudonyms - found their way into the *Collected Poems*, but none is among his better work. And that, I am afraid, is true of the *Weekly* as a whole.

The poetry of the troubles

By Douglas Dunn

MICHAEL LONGLEY:
Selected Poems 1963-1980
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\$5.50.
0 916390 14 4

Michael Longley's *Selected Poems* is published by a little-known American university press, presumably to introduce his work to American readers. But a British edition would not be a luxury. After all, the way in which a distinguished contemporary poet selects from his first seventeen years of writing is significant for the readers who have been following his work, especially as, in this case, Longley's first three collections are out of print.

Longley's first book, *No Continuing City* (1969), established at once that he was at home with the colloquial and natural as well as with artifice. Interestingly enough, the seven poems reprinted from that book do not include those which, through a refreshing technical accomplishment, recommended themselves at the time - poems like "Epithalamion", "A Personal Statement" and "The Hebrides".

His development suggests a slow riddance of the more noticeable restraints of formalism, an affectionate departure from rhyme and metre rather than a trite rejection of what can be achieved through traditional means. Verse, however, is still the ground on which Longley's writing is founded. In *An Exploded View* (1973), he introduces a new poetic technique, an experience against which poetic technique (let alone imagination) had to contend in ways that to most of us are hardly imaginable. "Wounds" is included, and two of his "Letters to Irish

Poets" (written in epistolary tetrameters). That book was interesting, too, for its portrayal of imaginary landscapes - "Ghost Town", "The Fairground", "The Island" and "Caravan" - the sort of places to which the mind retreats when more immediate subjects are offensively beyond a writer's temperament. Of these only "Caravan" has been selected, while no room has been found for the excellent "Albion".

As a result, a reader already familiar with Longley's work might find his attention re-directed to such poems as "Casualty", which worth comparing with Derek Mahon's "Matthew 29-30". In Longley's case, an animal cadaver is observed as it is reduced by the elements, until

... something that had followed
fox and crow was desperate for
A last morsel and was
Other than the wind and rain:

In Mahon's poem, the speaker reduces himself by imaginary surgery until he is attention re-directed to such poems as "Casualty", which worth comparing with Derek Mahon's "Matthew 29-30". In Longley's case, an animal cadaver is observed as it is reduced by the elements, until

A comparison of what Longley has chosen to reprint with one's own expectations provokes an appreciation of his remarkable consistency. It is that level of competence - I do not remember reading a poem by Longley which was noticeably bad - which has led some readers to think of his work as unexciting and others to welcome it as exemplary for the clearness of its imagery: what some see as his originality, others, no doubt, have seen as merely feckless. (Admittedly, his third book, *Man Lying on a Wall*

As a nature poet, Longley is as much fascinated by botany as by animals, and his *Selected Poems* offers at least a sample of this. A poem like "The Linen Workers" testifies to his status as a citizen whose Irish commitments are at the service of place and nature, love and art. It may be these which give him to write moving human elegies. His compassion and clean narrative line are both wonderfully effective in "Mayo Monologues" (from his recent book *The Echo Gate*). Three new poems close the book: "Patchwork", "The Third Light" and "The White Butterfly". The first and third of these, like many others of Longley's poems (for example, "The Linen Industry") are discreetly feminine but far from effeminate. Longley is one of the few poets writing who has had the candour to draw extensively from the annals of his personality. Apart from the excellence of his writing - which is important enough - it is that release into gentleness and into an affection which seems bewildered but always benevolent, always strange, always at an imagined angle to reality, that makes his work a crucial and instructive part of our contemporary poetry.

Red branch sagas

By Patricia Craig

MARIA TYMOCZKO (translator):
Two Death Tales from the Ulster Cycle
The Death of Cu Roi and the Death of Cu Chulainn
110pp. The Dolmen Press. £8.50.
0 85105 342 4

It is just over a century since Standish O'Grady "discovered" Cuchulainn. His prose adaptation of stories from the Red Branch saga is almost the equal of Macpherson's *Osian* as an example of the process of travestying original material. Sir Samuel Ferguson got a bit closer to the Old Irish spirit, but not much: his Cuchulainn is a fine Victorian embodiment of knightly virtues - "of fixed obedience, discipline, and patience. / Heroic courage, and protecting valour." Yeats, who admired Ferguson, soon produced his own version of the Red Branch hero (a more dignified and subtle one): "... now the war-rage in Cuchulainn woke". By the beginning of the present century, prose retellings of the Ulster tales among them those by Douglas Hyde or "The Swin", both of which are equally good.

As a nature poet, Longley is as much fascinated by botany as by animals, and his *Selected Poems* offers at least a sample of this. A poem like "The Linen Workers" testifies to his status as a citizen whose Irish commitments are at the service of place and nature, love and art. It may be these which give him to write moving human elegies. His compassion and clean narrative line are both wonderfully effective in "Mayo Monologues" (from his recent book *The Echo Gate*). Three new poems close the book: "Patchwork", "The Third Light" and "The White Butterfly". The first and third of these, like many others of Longley's poems (for example, "The Linen Industry") are discreetly feminine but far from effeminate. Longley is one of the few poets writing who has had the candour to draw extensively from the annals of his personality. Apart from the excellence of his writing - which is important enough - it is that release into gentleness and into an affection which seems bewildered but always benevolent, always strange, always at an imagined angle to reality, that makes his work a crucial and instructive part of our contemporary poetry.

There were fewer attempts at literal translation. (Whitley Stokes, as Maria Tymoczko translated excerpts from *The Death of Cu Chulainn* into English, and later contributed to a translation into French of the prose sections from that tale, as well as pieces of the poetry.) The difficulties facing scholars were enormous. The Red Branch cycle goes back to the Old Irish period (the sixth to twelfth centuries), and exists in two main versions: one Old Irish, the other recast in Middle Irish. The passages were passed on by copyists who often did not understand the forms in them, or worse yet, thought they did and "modernized" the spellings. Maria Tymoczko says in her introduction, "As a consequence the texts are rife with obscurities and ambiguities. Errors piled up and were perpetuated. In some cases it is doubtful whether the tales have survived in their entirety. Of those 'whose structure remained unchanged later', Patrick Power wrote in *A Literary History of Ireland*, "all tend to taper off after an impressive beginning and often end in a jumble of half-hints and notes." He attributes this, not improbably, to growing weariness on the part of the story-tellers, and the scribe.

Maria Tymoczko has undertaken the translation of two "death tales", one taken from the twelfth-century *Book of Leinster* and the other from the fourteenth-century *Yellow Book of Lecan*, partly, she says, to supplement Thomas Kinsella's selection in *The Táin* (1969), and also to correct the common view of Cuchulainn as the hero without blemish. (*Cuchulainn* is the usual anglicized form of *Cú Chulainn*, two words.) The tales are linked: Cuchulainn is responsible for the death of Cu Roi Mac Dairi, and, in turn, is despatched by Cu Roi's son Lugaid. Each killing is accomplished in the midst of ritual acts, magic, the breaking of taboos and elaborate portents. As an unenchanted commentator (Magnus MacLean) remarked sternly in 1902, "The Celtic imagination has here full play, untrammelled by the limitations of physical science and modern thought".

Hand-hunting was the sport of these Iron Age warriors: a bloody business. "While they were butchering each other around the hillfort, Cuchulainn sheared off the men's head and set fire to the fort," we read in Maria Tymoczko's version. Cuchulainn's prowess is formidable: "He split forty breasts and one hundred skulls." We're reminded of the later Gaelic poems of abundance in the list of Cuchulainn's fearsome deeds and in Ferchertne's "Eulogy of Cu Roi".

Cu Roi granted me
Ten holdings
Of Daire's sons
Ten slave-women
Ten golden bridles
Ten noble horses
Ten bordered garments
Ten cauldrons ...

so it goes on. Mrs Tymoczko's method of translating is similar to Thomas Kinsella's: she hasn't attempted to reproduce features of early Irish syntax and phraseology, but aims instead at a functional rendering in current English. The scholar's objective, unlike that of the popularizers and retailers who often collate several versions in order to arrive at a coherent narrative, is fidelity to the originals - interpolations, lacunae and all. Mrs Tymoczko hasn't tampered unnecessarily with the form or the style of these early tales; and she has added a valuable introduction and extensive notes, all of which makes this a thoroughly satisfactory, unimpeachable edition.

Launching on the marriage market

By Victoria Glendinning

GEORGE MOORE:
A Drama in Muslin
A Realistic Novel
With an Introduction by A. Norman Jeffares
329pp. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe.
£9.50 (paperback, £3.25).
0 86140 055 0

This review will not be without bias. *A Drama in Muslin* is one of my favourite novels. It was first published in 1886, when George Moore was in his early thirties; in 1915 he revised and shortened it, and it reappeared as *Muslin*. Subtitled "A Realistic Novel", it is the story of five girls from Co. Galway who leave school at the same time, and of how each fares on being launched into Dublin society.

Their object is to get married. Alice Barton, the heroine, who is clever, good, but not very pretty, looks at her country neighbours, the three fading Misses Brennan, and reflects that "There is a reason for the existence of a packhorse, but none for that of an unmarried woman." Yet the blatant social scheming appals her as much as the "white death" of spinsterhood. "Give me a mission to perform, and I will live. ... But oh! save me from this grey dream of idleness."

Her younger sister Olive has no such scruples; blonde, exquisite and empty, "in that beautiful framework nothing was wanting but a mind". Their mother is equally silly - and plotting, and shrewd, flapping her dainty white hands at lords and instructing her daughters: "A woman is absolutely nothing without a husband; if she does not want to pass for a failure she must get a husband: and upon this all her ideas must be set."

There are bound to be many failures. Alice's best friend is Cecilia Cullen, for whom there is not much hope, as she is hunchbacked. Cecilia is passionately fond of Alice, "and the intensity of this affection had given rise to conjecturing". Then there is May Gould, short and plump, the sexy one of the group; in her "the rolling roundness of every part of the body definitely announced a want of fixed principle, and a somewhat gross and sensual temperament". And so it proves. May ends the season having landed not a husband but an unwanted baby. Students of costume may be interested to note that May wears "shammy-leather drawers" to keep her warm under her bell dress. (How far is Moore's "realism" to be trusted? He has laburnum blooming in August, which it doesn't, even in Ireland.)

Lastly there is Violet Scully, elegant and composed, whose "almost complete want of person" gave her the appearance of a convalescent boy. Yet it is she who snatches the match of the season, weedy Lord Kilarney, from pretty Olive Barton.

But that is for the dénouement. The meat of the book concerns the ludicrous but deadly serious rituals of the Dublin season, for which the girls and their mothers stay at the Shelbourne Hotel. At the dress-maker's (Moore describes stuffs and styles in litany of purplish, Paterish prose) rivals deciding on ball gowns pass on the stairs with false smiles. At the Drawing-room at Dublin Castle, where they are presented to the Viceroys, the girls are herded like lovely sweating beasts, described in terms of variegated roses all dressed in white muslin. The presentation is their holiest moment; approaching His Excellency, the girls experience "the nerve atrophy, the systolic emotion of communicants, who when the bell rings, approach the altar rails to receive God within their mouths".

"In the great matrimonial stakes women have to hunt in packs. At the death of the prey they may fight among themselves, and the slyest will carry off the prey." These gatherings - elaborately composed by Moore with great

verve and precision of vocabulary - are the major set-pieces of the novel. There are dinners, and a Castle ball, where the girls hang about the doorways, "their eyes liquid with invitation" to catch men's attention. For if they are not asked to dance they will sit in shaming ranks around the walls, and if they do not extort a proposal, they will go back to their country houses for another boring, empty year, only to be brought on to the market again the next season, older and less liquid-eyed.

Moore makes all this very funny, and degrading, and dreadful. The effect on the mentality of some of the girls is made manifest when Lord Kilarney, besotted with desire, proposes to skinny Violet Scully. He thinks of "the long years of happiness" with his beloved that lie ahead: she "of how grand it would be to be a marchioness, of her triumph over the other girls".

While the girls "dream unflinchingly of their white dresses", Moore weaves in another, parallel story: the story of the grumbling unrest and Land League activities that were dividing the country. Clever Alice Barton, watching the sullen peasantry, "has already begun to see something wrong in each big house being surrounded by a hundred small ones, all working to keep it in sloth and luxury". Now there were threats, murders, rumours of murders: "An entire race, a whole caste, saw themselves driven out of their soft, warm couches of idleness, and forced into the struggle for life."

The two themes - the marriage market and the land war - are united in a cross-cut sequence in which Mrs Barton, within the house, explains to an enamoured officer that he cannot possibly marry Olive unless he can settle £1000 a year on her; while outside, her ineffectual husband is wrangling with unruly tenants over rents. Later Mrs Barton reaches the indecent point where, desperate to secure Lord Kilarney for Olive, and knowing that he is in financial trouble, she offers the little marquess £20,000 if he will marry her daughter. But he prefers sly Miss Scully, and Olive, undisputed belle of the season, fails to nail a man. But some of the girls, like the peasants, are ready to revolt against the system.

Alice makes friends in the Shelbourne drawing-room with an English writer, Mr Harding, who encourages her to use her mind and earn her living by writing. Freethinking Harding, once a Shavian hero, carries the author's messages. He tells Alice that "a nation cannot be republican so long as it is Christian. Republicanism is common sense, Christianity is faith, and faith is the power of believing what is not true." It was his firm belief, he told her, that both Protestantism and Catholicism were doomed, that "in fifty - say a hundred - years priests and parsons, in common with other fortune-tellers,

will be prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act". This story is set in 1881-82. The hundred years are up.

Poor deformed Cecilia, disturbed and disgusted by Alice's attachment first to Harding, and then to the worthy doctor to whom she finally makes a happy marriage, sinks deeper and deeper into what Moore depicts as the hysteria of repressed sexuality, and rants at Alice for pages. In the end she announces that she will become a Roman Catholic and take the veil: for she had been the only Protestant among them.

This is important. The other girls, and their families and friends, were not the Ascendancy: they were prosperous Roman Catholics, part of a parallel universe with its parallel hierarchies of peers, bishops and hostesses. Dublin Cecilia, with its English Viceroys and its English values was the focus for socially aspiring Catholics - "Castle Catholics" - since there was no other centre to aspire to. The girls in this book were once educated in England; but Violet Scully's mother had served in a grocer's shop in Galway town. The number of Catholic peers was limited: dinner parties had to be made up by such as Mr Ryan and Mr Lynch, who had brogues and uncertain table manners and who were not to be accepted as suitors unless all else failed.

At Mass, the middle-class Catholics sat apart from the peasantry, fingering their gilded missals, watching what Alice saw as the "by-play with the wine and water, the mumbling of the uplifted hands", and averting their eyes and noses from the hawking, shambling crowd of people in the body of the church. But an unacknowledged social ambiguity was an added strain on the girls. The shameless, shameful hunt for husbands and social standing. Moore had no opinion at all of this society: "We are in a land of echoes and shadows. Smirking, pretending, grimacing, the poor shades go by ..."

Norman Jeffares in his introduction says that *A Drama in Muslin* is "ostensibly about education", which is an inadequate, even a misleading statement. "But it is much more than that. ... In this novel Moore is portraying his native country in the period of the Land League. Professor Jeffares is at pains to make clear the political background and to relate it to the Moore's own situation as landlords in Co. Sligo, at the expense of the novel's equation - the outspoken and cheerfully blasphemous condemnation of middle-class social, sexual and religious attitudes, which must have startled the readers of the *Court and Society Review* in which it first appeared. Jeffares himself points out, without drawing much sustenance from it, that Moore said the theme of *A Drama in Muslin* was

the same as that of *A Doll's House*.

Moore also said, in *Hail and Farewell*, that Alice Barton was "a preparatory study, a prevision of Esther Waters; both represent the personal conscience striving against the communal". *Muslin* has other literary relations too, outside his own work. Alice Barton reminds one of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, and her pretty sister Olive of Rosamund Vincy in the same book (Moore had read *Middlemarch* with delight in his grandfathers' library at Moore Hall in his early teens, he says in *Conversations in Ebury Street*). Alice Barton is also like one of Jane Austen's sharp heroines - Elizabeth Bennet, for example - and the five husband-hunting girls in *Pride and Prejudice* parallel the five in *Muslin* (Mrs Barton is a finer-grained Mrs Bennet). And the precise formula of *Muslin* - a group of former school-friends coping variously with the adult world - was rediscovered by Mary McCarthy for *The Group*.

The fate of the "poor muslin martyrs" is at the heart of this novel. The most explicit and effective feminist fiction, at the time when it was most needed, was by men: Grassing, Meredith, Shaw, and Moore. Moore perhaps could empathize with women because he was himself a womanist - he referred in his 1915 preface to *Muslin* to his own "sloping shoulders and female hands" - but this is not the whole point. When a woman writes about women's experiences she writes, in essence, "I feel ..."; she feels only herself, she is the centre of her universe. A man can't join her there but he can see her from outside, in a context that is real and rational for him as it is not for her. (It is the difference between his "landscape with figures" and her "figures in a landscape"). As Susan Mitchell wrote in her small, sly book on George Moore published in 1915: "Women know instinctively all [Moore] knows about love and more also. It is intellect we are after. The intellect he brings to bear upon love we wash out of his novels as carefully as the miser washes the gold from the clay."

One such nugget from *A Drama in Muslin* is a passage relating to Alice's attachment to Mr Harding. "In no country," Moore writes, "have men been loved so implicitly by women as in the nineteenth." But this is not merely owing to the "natural wants of love" and the necessity to get married: "there are psychological reasons that today more than ever impel women to shrink from the intellectual monotony of their sex" and to seek out intelligent male society. "For as the gates of the harem are broken down, and the gloom of the female mind clears, and grows keenly alive to the sensations and ideas of modern life," a woman sees in a man "the incarnation of the freedom of which she is vaguely conscious and which she is perceptibly acquiring".

This, says Moore, is the main current; but there is also (as in Irish politics) "an undercurrent of hatred and revolt". Some women, in their realization of "the abasement their sex have been in the past, and are still being in the present, subjected to", reject love - "in the sense of sexual intercourse" - in passionate disgust. "Like Cecilia in this novel, in different ways, claim Moore, are 'curiously representative' of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In questions of class, of politics and of sex, it is far more a case of 'beat them or join them' - a choice that obtains, some might think, in the last quarter of the twentieth century as of the nineteenth."

Marriage as a Trade by Cicely Hamilton which was first published in 1909 at the height of the suffragette movement has recently been reissued with an introduction by Jane Lewis (150pp. London: The Women's Press; £2.95. 0 7043 3870 X).

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Frank Ormsby

Pouring mountain waters into severed heads

By Edna Longley

BRENDAN KENNELLY (Editor):
The Penguin Book of Irish Verse
Second Edition
470pp. Penguin Books. £2.50.
0 14 042 121 1

Aquarius, No. 12.
A general issue, including poetry
from Ireland.
136pp. Available from Flat 3, 116
Sutherland Ave, London W4. £2.50.

Like many anthologies, *The Penguin Book of Irish Verse* steers a steady course, only to end up a nervous wreck on the rocks of today. The first two sections (unrevised) more than adequately cover the scene before Yeats, or prepare it for him. Brendan Kennelly wisely appoints Frank O'Connor chief interpreter of the Gaelic centuries, and prints the whole of his superb version of *Merriman's "Midnight Court"*. The nineteenth-century hitherto ignored Irish poetry in English can be monitored through ample selections from erratic Mangan and methodical Ferguson, who between them made translation a stay against irreversible discontinuity. Kennelly might, however, have found greater space for William Allingham's *Lawrence Bloomfield in Ireland*, which approaches social and political questions more specifically than do the surrounding asilings, exhortations and laments. This is how Allingham satirizes the prejudices of "an Antrim Presbyterian":

Ireland, forsooth, "a nation once again!"
If Ireland was a nation, tell me when:
For since the civil modern world began

What's Irish history? Walks the child a nun?
What Ireland might have been, if wisely schooled,
I know not: far too briefly Cromwell ruled.

For better reasons - diversity not perversity - attempts to unify Irish poetry are doomed to failure. Kennelly rashes generalizes: "a hard, simple, virile, rhetorical clarity is its most memorable characteristic. The Irish mind has never taken kindly to obscurity. It delights in simple, direct, lively expression." That is a romantic view - Irish poets as the playboys of the western world - which undercuts a tradition that embraces the complex and the simple, precision and mist, not to mention Mangan, the "Tortured torturer of reluctant rhymes".

Kennelly's boldest stroke, second time round, is to insert Patrick Kavanagh's recently rediscovered long poem *Lough Derg*. After a powerful start -

From Cavan and Leitrim and from Mayo
From all the thin-faced parishes where hills
Are perished moses running peaty water,
They come to Lough Derg to fast and pray...

- the poem turns into a poor reflection of *The Great Hunger* (apparently excluded because available in Penguin's *Longer Contemporary Poems*). Yet, despite Kavanagh's frequent performances "on a dead leaf string", Kennelly's Note to the Second Edition hardly exaggerates his totemic significance in Irish poetry, and in "our struggle to be free from [barbarism and stupidity]... the little gloom, bumptious self-conscious modernism, philistinism, pomposity, religiosity, Kavanagh - in Irish eyes more truly Yeats's 'opposite' than either Hardy or Eliot -

embodied as well as articulated a historic deprivation and restriction. At the same time, Kennelly's salute to his salutary points South. The Northern editor of the Irish section of *Aquarius*, citing Ciarán Mor's legendary death, mischievously observes: "nowadays one of the tasks of our poets is pouring mountain waters into severed heads".

Anthologies, in being representative, are levelers. They do in a sense count Yeats "one with Davis, Mangan, Ferguson". The later stages of the *Penguin Book* compound this bias by admitting, except in a few arbitrary cases, only one poem per poet. Whether due to publishers' economy or editorial diplomacy, such rationing isolates good poems and drags them down with the stinkers. Kennelly now rightly introduces Paul Muldoon, Paul Durcan and Frank Ormsby, the promising Thomas McCarthy and Aidan Matthews. But to several feeble poems already in the first edition, he adds some pretty soft rhetoric from John F. Deane ("Five thousand million years ago, this earth/heaving in a mass of rocks and fire") and John Ennis ("You hallowed my parents/Blew indoors, ran out of the book-worm heart-blazing house"). As regards living poets who made the anthology in 1970, the freezing of Kennelly's original choices from their work causes further distortion. Apart from the fact that gill-edged Seamus Heaney stock warrants fuller investment, "At a Potato Digging", from *Death of a Naturalist*, is not a proper death of his achievement. Other poets to remain transfixed in earshot: John Montague has never written *The Rough Field*, Thomas Kinsella done nothing after *Downstream*; while the chance to include Derek Mahon's "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford" - a convenient *summa* if ever there was one - is lost.

Thus *Aquarius*, with obvious advantages of space and topicality, offers a more reliable sample of current developments. Heaney's "Widow" is one of his best short poems: a man finding the dead bird's "voice-box" "blew upon it/unex-

pectedly/his own small widgeon cries" - possibly a portrait of the poet, in contrast. "A Kite for Michael and Christopher" shows signs of strain once the kite is in the air: "take it in your two hands, boys, and feel the strumming rooted long-tailed pull of grief". Derek Mahon's "Astronomy in North Carolina" also over-stresses characteristic qualities, in not quite transcending a brilliant cosmic conceit: "to the bland panoptic eye/America is its own night-sky." The craft of Heaney and Mahon reminds us that, whereas Northern Irish poets have largely homed towards British traditionalism and formalism, Southern poets, like Denis Devlin and Thomas Kinsella, have uncut (not always successfully). For instance, Anthony Cronin's contributions to *Aquarius* seem almost schizophrenically divided between ballad-quatrains and a Beckettian prose-poem. Desmond Egan's cunning-guess "Unique" is more effective. However, Frank Ormsby, whose poems sometimes parody Ulster tightness and concreteness, has loosened up both metrically and imaginatively. And Wes Magee's comment, in a perceptive review of recent Irish poetry, about "the sense of unity that exists within literary Ireland" registers an increasingly broad creative interaction.

Heaney's pan-Irish influence has, of course, opened doors, though Aidan Mathew's individuality feels the draught: "Once I witnessed him/Falter under a milk-crate/Then straighten to blow/In his small horse's nostrils." Thomas McCarthy, not immune either, comes up with good lines in his (Penguin) elegy for De Valera ("Today/They lowered the tallest one") and in his translation of the Gaelic "Three Forges of Making" ("Lastly, we were scorched in the critic's slow coal"). The youngest poet in *Aquarius*, twenty-year-old Damian Gorman, is more completely original. His poems communicate the ambivalent intoxication of dedicating oneself to poetry. In "Memories" a girl is sacrificed to the poem a sea-shore idyll inspires: "A

year has passed/And (honouring her whim)/He leaves the girl, and takes the rock/with him." Aidan Murphy has some arresting images, including one for Irish immobility: "statues on an escalator".

Outside the Irish Pale, *Aquarius* contains Duncan Forbes's clever skit, "Mr Larkin":

So it happens that I write
As Mr Larkin would and tinkler with
The same wry neo-Georgian stuff...

Larkin look-alikes are now less common in English poetry, but their comparative rarity in Ireland suggests differences of orientation. The three most interesting poets who emerged in the 1970s, Paul Muldoon, Paul Durcan and Medbh McGuckian, all perceive the world through strange symbolic glasses. Medbh McGuckian has rapidly become known for her disturbing transmutation of "homes-and-gardens" objects into psychic experience. Paul Durcan's poetry has not gained in Britain the circulation it deserves, perhaps because he publishes with small Irish presses, perhaps because his sensibility is as peculiarly, aboriginally Irish as that of Mangan or Kavanagh. "Birth of a Coachman", in the *Penguin Book*, exemplifies Durcan's spiritual intensity, mythic use of place names and renewing of the best kind of Gaelic rhetoric:

Praising the breasts of the hills round
Sailing full furrow through the
Curragh of Kildare
Through the thousand sea-daisies of a
thousand white-shapes...

"Mushrooms" proves yet again Muldoon's very considerable artistic maturity. The poem's symbolism, which mixes ordinary mushrooms with the "magic" variety, not only underlines Muldoon's alchemical powers, but also explores the perennial tug between the murky compost of Irish roots and imaginative liberation. A nightmare vision at the end of the poem speaks with the veiled threat of H-Block: "Lie down with us now and wrap yourself in the soiled grey blanket of Irish rain."

An exile's semantic scruple

By John Mole

DEREK MAHON:
Courtyards in Delft
29pp. Dublin: Gallery Press. £1.80.
0 904011 20 8

Born in the same year as Derek Mahon, and with a keen, subliminal awareness of his contemporaries, I first came across his work in Harry Chambers' magazine *Phoenix*, where several of his early poems appeared. Their appeal was immediate, and his feelings can be summed up by Michael Longley's notice of Mahon's first collection, *Night Crossing*, in the Irish Times: "Even after a first reading... one is struck by the vigour and swiftness of his rhythms, by the bold but appropriate wit and rhetoric, by the marvellous liveliness of it all." Here was an exciting, mercantile poet: a poet on edge, chosen epigraph for the interim pamphlet *Ecclesiastes*, which became part of his second collection *Lives*, was a line from Seferis: "We who do nothing will teach them peace." In his own work it felt like a peace to be snatched from the gaps between turbulent events and held there with a passionate exactness: "An eddy of semantic scruple/ In an unstructured sea."

At about this point in his development, Mahon was reading Robert Lowell very attentively, and in an interview review of *Near the Ocean* (*Phoenix*, Summer 1967) he pointed out how Lowell had come to view life as a flux "without the kind of transcendental meaning which is the first premise of religion and metaphysics" and compared him with the Matthew Arnold of "Dover Beach", noting also

a similarity between Lowell's new poems and the "casual, reflective manner" adopted by W.H. Auden when he went to live in New York - a poetry in which "serenely replaces intensity as the desired end". Mahon's own work arrived at a watershed in "Beyond Howth Head", a sustained verse letter as similar in its four-foot line and wrenched rhyming couplets to Lowell's "deliberately" reminiscent of Marvell. In its closing stanzas, Mahon described what he had attempted as "my Dover Beach scenario" and, in the final couplet, "put out the light on Maller's *Arms of the Night*" (this was a book which featured Lowell, notably his public reading of "Waking Early Sunday Morning", and whose title alluded to the closing couplet of Arnold's poem); a telling synthesis and clear indication of Mahon's concerns. What he seemed to be developing - with reference to a line through perspective, and a tone not so much serene as serenely intense and capable of engaging with the "unstructured" sea of contemporary civilization without becoming lofty and remote. For Arnold, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone"; for Mahon, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone"; for Arnold, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone"; for Mahon, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone".

For Arnold, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone"; for Mahon, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone"; for Arnold, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone"; for Mahon, looking across to the French coast, "the light/Gleams, and is gone".

Subsequently, Derek Mahon's best work has occupied, with grace and characteristic scruple, that "middle ground between order and chaos" which he found Lowell. None of his earlier panache has been sacrificed, but

the theme of exile has deepened, its scope becoming altogether larger. Technically he still takes a dandyish delight in the fashioning of ingenious Gershwin-esque rhymes at the heart of his most serious pieces ("glamorous" "cameras", for example, in "Songs of Praise" from this new collection) but such flashily brilliant only serves to heighten the tension which is the source of these poems' power. Throughout *Courtyards in Delft* there is a profound lyrical unease: the dark "dazzles", sunlight "flares", objects "perceived in a 'rare stillness' as 'dazzle-bright'". In "Derry Morning", the collection's opening poem, a strangely pastoral silence rules: "The shining roofs and murmuring schools". There is threat in all images of peace, and a chilling peacefulness in the wake of violence: "Hard to believe this tranquil place/ Its desolation almost peace/ With recently a boom-town wild/ With expectation". And how characteristic that boom-town pun is of Mahon at his most arresting.

In the title poem - after a painting by Pieter de Hooch - a domestic scene is observed in which "Nothing is random nothing goes to waste" but

That girl with her back to us who waits
For her man to come home from his sea
Will wait till the paint disintegrates
And ruined dyes admit the eurythmic sea

Again, how much more threatening than a mere "hungry" is "eurythmic", the parables of the disintegration, and the surprise it occasions is crucial to the poem, just as in "Girls on the Bridge" the unplumbed, reflective lake "is a deliberate echo of Arnold's 'To Marguerite' and occasions an immediate sense of distance and estrangement. *Courtyards in Delft* is subtle, allusive and profound; a very good book, enlarging beyond its modest dimensions.

Yours sincerely, Augustine Birrell

By Leon O Broin

When I spent a few days in John Dillon's Mayo home in 1922 I was greatly impressed by his library, particularly the editions of the major English poets. Dillon, as F. S. L. Lyons says, was a bibliomaniac but one who read what he collected. The same could be said of Augustine Birrell and his library of 10,000 volumes; he was also, of course, an essayist of some distinction, and in my young days and middle years nearly every educated person seemed to know his *Obiter Dicta*. Being the Liberal Chief Secretary of Ireland from 1907 to 1916, he and Dillon had much to say to each other apart from books, for Dillon shared with John Redmond the direction of the Irish Parliamentary Party but doubtless enjoyed Birrell's letters for their literary flavour as well as for their political content. At any rate he preserved them and they are now in the manuscript room of Trinity College, Dublin.

Apart from being about the same age, the two men had little in common in the backgrounds to their careers. Birrell was a Liverpudlian, the son of a Baptist Minister from Kirkcaldy. He had been a barrister and university professor of comparative law before going into Parliament where he represented in succession West Fife and North Bristol. In the Commons he was an impressive speaker, his manner being so totally unaffected that he was able to make the wittiest of observations without the suspicion of a smile. Where so many of his predecessors had failed in handling Irish affairs, he was a notable success - that is until 1916, when he became what I have described elsewhere as the first casualty of the Easter Rising. Until then he had cleverly contrived to appear to be not unduly interfering with what was essentially and innocently the Sinn Féin movement, while taking care that it was to a degree effectively silenced. Following the discovery of a compact with the Germans on Good Friday of that year he had authorized the arrest of the leaders. That would have forestalled a rising, but he had also accepted that that action should be deferred until Easter Tuesday. The Rising occurred the day before, on Easter Monday. As the punters say, he had been "pipped at the post". He felt obliged to resign the Chief Secretaryship and his seat in the Cabinet, and later retired from politics altogether.

That was not the only tragedy in his life. His wife, who was related through an earlier marriage to the poet Tennyson's family, developed an inoperable brain tumour which sent her into an imaginary world, a "delicious dreamland", Birrell at first called it, "where to do anything seemed *contra naturam*". But her death when it came was an immeasurable relief. He explained that, as he sat in his study to respond to Dillon's message of sympathy, it was "for the moment a positive pleasure to know that she was not lying blind and wandering and desolate upstairs, breathing painfully". A writer in *The Times* had done his best, and very kindly, but he had not really known her. Contrary to what he implied, she had been very keen on politics, though hating lobby gossip and the rivalries of ministers, and not greatly admiring parliamentary eloquence or the humbug of debate. On Education and Home Rule, two fields in which her husband had been ministerially involved, hers was a constructive mind and she longed to see things done. She loved Ireland and the Irish, she said, and this, I believe, genuinely mirrored Birrell's sentiments.

Their two children added another element of tragedy to Birrell's private life. One of them was from birth mentally handicapped, and Birrell for a time had to leave him in care in the West of Ireland. The other, Frankie Birrell of the Bloomsbury set, made things difficult for his father by avoiding military service at a time when his father carried some responsibility for recruitment in Ireland. It was not the pleasant duty, we surmise. Writing to his Under Secretary in early 1916 about a recruiting meeting in Galway at which he had spoken, Birrell said: "It was a really huge assemblage, and had the cause been really popular, and had Redmond been a Dan O'Connell, they would have sworn in lustrous recruits by the thousand. But the cause was not popular, but only interesting, and the Leader of the Nationalist Party was not a great Dan but only a plucky fellow in an odd situation. It was a curious thing to watch - all the outward signs and tokens of a friendly crowd, but the soul was not there, and how should it be?"

As soon as he conveniently could, he took himself away along the roads to and had Redmond been a Dan O'Connell, they would have sworn in lustrous recruits by the thousand. But the cause was not popular, but only interesting, and the Leader of the Nationalist Party was not a great Dan but only a plucky fellow in an odd situation. It was a curious thing to watch - all the outward signs and tokens of a friendly crowd, but the soul was not there, and how should it be?"

and only consulted him, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, as a kind of afterthought: "Winston writes to me a little perturbed about the Ulster meeting. He seems to think that he can breathe a spirit of sweet reasonableness and hope and security throughout North-East Ulster, if only he is left alone to do it. It all seems very premature to me. He is not in a position to say anything and even if he were, it would only be so much more fuel for the flames." "This escapade", as Birrell called it, ended in near-comedy, but "taught Winston nothing". Deprived of the Ulster Hall, the meeting, much reduced in numbers, was held in a marquee on a football pitch, and Churchill had to make a rather undignified exit from the city. Birrell did not think much of their Ulster Rule allies in Ulster either. "They were the greediest, most persistent, and ungrateful beggars that ever drew breath." And as for "The Carsonic March", it appeared ridiculous to him. He thought Carson's head had turned.



Augustine Birrell

one of the western haunts he so loved. The hills were glistening with snow, and the bogs a glorious red. "Altogether", he confessed, "the West still tugs at my heart harder than the war." He never returned to Ireland after 1916. He might have done so in the 1920s or 1930s, but he was a dreadfully bad sailor and he remembered only too painfully the tossing and turning he had had to endure on "that little bit of water" that separated the two islands.

There was tragedy in Dillon's political life, too. He was another of the Easter Rising's casualties, a fate he shared with Redmond and practically the whole of the Irish Party, though that only became a certainty at the 1918 General Election. Like Birrell, Dillon then went into retirement and only briefly emerged to oppose the conscription that with Birrell he had succeeded in deferring. He was grievously disappointed by the turn of events. From 1880 he had been an advanced nationalist, a Fenian suspect in fact, but one who preferred to achieve his aims if possible by constitutional means. He was not opposed to the use of arms in appropriate circumstances, however, and he was appalled when the Easter Rising occurred. At that particular time, with representatives of the government, with the Viceine, Lady Aberdeen, was also bothering him: she, with her diminutive consort, was to be replaced in Dublin, a thought that gave him considerable satisfaction, but they were moving heaven and earth to have the decision reversed. Early in the new year, he managed to get a holiday free from stress - in Switzerland, a country he loved and in which he hoped to end his days. It was a small, mountainous republic country, he told Dillon, but a stupid one. It had no "quick wits" or "beastly newspapers", and it spoke four languages so badly that the visitor had a chance of understanding what was being said.

Redmond's commitment of Ireland to support Britain in the war was a spontaneous act. Dillon was not consulted about it and in later years he assailed it as a blunder and a turning-point in the affairs of the Irish Party, but there is no point in this in the Birrell letters, nor would one expect it. At this time, as Lyons indicates in his biography of Dillon, the greater attraction for him was the international situation. This was a continuing interest, and Birrell satisfied it in his letters, particularly about developments in Italy and Eastern Europe. Both men were concerned with the effects of propaganda from Ireland. "I get no end of letters", said Birrell, "from good comfortable illiterate Liberals who are shocked

beyond belief by all this writing which is new to them who tell me that it is opening their eyes!! and making them think!!! His Most gracious Majesty is not a bad test of his people and he shares to the full their quaint emotions. They demand rough treatment and when they have got it they will be satisfied but not till then."

It was somewhat in this context, at the end of November 1914, that Birrell drew Dillon's attention to the Foreign Office's concern for what was happening at the Holy See.

"The F.O.", he wrote, "are keen on having some kind of a personal mission to the Vatican, where the Prussians and Austrians are well represented, and are putting their case with *dramatic effect*. They think the former representative of the Country at The Hague, an elderly gentleman who has been remote from politics all his life and is a Catholic, would be as good a man as they can find. He bears the suspicious name of Howard, but he is not of the Norfolk breed..." The

point arises who is to be associated with him - two secretaries. A very able Catholic in the F.O. called Gregory has the special confidence of the F.O. and is intimate with some of the Roman entourage. Who should be the other? *Bolton, M.P.*, was suggested (not by me). It is a F.O. business and I confess it would not have occurred to me but as I have said they are bent upon it. I told Grey [the Foreign Secretary] I wished to write to you on the subject (in confidence) and he was very willing indeed that I should do so. It is probably most desirable we should have some direct channel of communication with the Vatican but it will annoy the *Ulster* fanatics and I don't think our old Nonconformists (if there are any left) can raise voices, already hoarse with war songs, against it. They would send a Mission to Hell if they thought they could capture the Devil.

Characteristically, Birrell availed himself of an occasion like this to discuss Grey's personality and potential. "He is", he said, "what he is for good or ill. But he is not a *stagnant pool*. His mind works in a passionate manner, but it does work and grows, and the strange foreigners he has to colloquy with are all the more impressed because they have not seen the like before."

There was another side to the need for British representation at the Vatican, the growth of Sinn Féinism in the Roman Catholic where Irish students for the priesthood were prepared:

The elderly diplomat we sent to the Vatican and who makes up in sentiment for any of Grey's deficiencies [Birrell reported later] was deeply distressed by the *hoyon* put upon him by the Irish College in Rome. Nobody came from it to the Great reception given by my friend Cardinal Gasquet (whom I got into the Athenaeum in order that there might be somebody else besides myself who did not believe that the Archbishop of Canterbury is in Holy Orders). It was a grief Roman reception, in the 16th century palace of *San Calisto* and more than half the Cardinals were there, and all the "Black" laity, but not a single member of the Irish College came - and further David Fleming (said to be an Irishman) whose ministrations in the Church of *San Silvestro* are attended by English-speaking Catholics "returned his invitation to Cardinal Gasquet's Secretary". This treatment is put down, not to the Rector, Monsignor Ruard, but to a wicked Sinn Féiner, Dr Hagan, the Vice Rector. Poor Howard shivers in his shoes at such wickedness in holy garb.

He suggested later still that if Dillon and the Rector would exchange letters through the Foreign Office bag it might have a good effect. "Gregory of the F.O. who is over there is a good enough fellow and a *Home Ruler* but lacks understanding. I expect the Rector talks a little wildly, after the Maynooth fashion, and I don't suppose Cardinal Gasquet has any real grasp of the Irish situation. I don't know that it matters much, but it is worth an effort." And, quoting John Henry Newman, he later added that the atmosphere of Rome breathes suspicion.

Dillon wrote as Birrell recommended but we do not know what effect his intervention had. In the light of Dr Hagan's form in the 1920s, it had probably little or none. Birrell's principal concern was, of course, the Italian position in regard to the war. That country's policy was always tortuous, he said, and the most honest of men would find it difficult to walk straight along her very crooked path. But Italy would come in on their side - that he believed; and, as we know, she did in fact enter the war against Austria-Hungary in May 1915, leaving over a declaration against Germany until August 1916. For his part, Dillon placed little reliance on the Italians; even if they were ultimately to join the Allies, he believed their armies would not be much use. The Pope was desperately anxious for peace, he stressed, and would naturally prefer Italy to keep out of the conflict altogether.

With the war going badly and promising to be long drawn out, George V tried to set a fashion of austerity. "At Windsor Castle all was testatolism and melancholia", Birrell remarked; but when he lunched with the Prime Minister they were still able to drink claret. Politically it was "all very dark". A new government, a coalition, was on the way and was being discussed by "a dishonest press", but Birrell did not think a coalition would inspire confidence or feel any in itself. It would be too big for war and too muddled for peace. He did not know what was going to happen to Irish administration. Apparently he was to be left alone as

There was another side to the need for British representation at the Vatican, the growth of Sinn Féinism in the Roman Catholic where Irish students for the priesthood were prepared:

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Chief Secretary, but would "the Irish Unionist Pigeon, the greediest pig in Ireland, who starved for ten years, willingly stand aside without even a foot in the trough". If only Bulgaria and Romania would come along things might buzz a bit. He expected Winston to go to the front and get killed. He would most certainly have to leave the Admiralty.

In the coalition government when it came the Liberals had twelve posts, the Unionists eight, Labour one, and Kitchener of Khairoum retained the Secretaryship of State for War. The Irish Party had been urged to join, but Redmond - with Dillon fully sharing his point of view - resisted all pressure to do so. The sharing of power was seen to work, however, to the detriment of the Irish nationalists. Carson became Attorney General, despite their protestations, and "the worst of the case", as Birrell explained, is that a coalition or Union of Forces can only proceed on the basis that it is one all through. "I made out my case for special treatment for Ireland on grounds of the highest reason, and made it perfectly plain that I would not consent for a moment to share the daily life of Irish Administration with the Unionist gung-faction-party, call it what you will. On this there was a fight with the result, as I now gather from the P.M., that James Campbell alone has effected a lodgment [to be the Irish Lord Chancellor]. Even yet the P.M. does not properly grasp the position of an Irish Lord Chancellor but he has, I hope, succeeded in making it clear to the other side (now united to us in unwholy matrimony) that there is to be no interference in the Irish Administration. So there it stands. I cannot tell you how I long to be out of it. I can't bear the idea of physical contact in No. 10 Downing Street with those fellows."

Two months later he was telling Dillon that the more he saw of the coalition the more he hated it. "It is being condemned to live in Hell, with the door wide open through which at any moment you can make your escape. I sometimes find myself wishing that all the damned wire-pullers and intriguers who are plotting for the P.M.'s fall might, at least momentarily, succeed and scuttle the ship." "Meanwhile," the War continues a haunting horror, and he was afraid Warsaw would fall. "We must carry the Dardanelles," he insisted, "but it is the most terrific enterprise the human race ever attempted."

What might seem to have been relatively minor Irish distractions appeared all the time in the letters. Birrell notes, for example, that "the Gaelic League split was inevitable, but is very melancholy. Poor Dr. Hyde." In an Irish historical context, however, this was an extremely important development. The secret Irish Republican Brotherhood, in its drive towards revolution before the Great War ended, had taken over for its own purpose a great non-political body concerned with the survival of the Irish language, leaving Douglas Hyde, the most influential figure among its founding fathers, with little option but to resign. The ways of Dublin Castle

and the Viceroyal Court remained essentially unchanged, however, and Birrell could always see their funny side. From the picturesque village of Adare in the County Limerick to which he went, with the new Lord Lieutenant and his lady in mid-April 1915, he wrote: "Here I am basking in the long delayed sunshine, in the smiles of a Limerick... gave their excellencies a tremendous welcome, and all the [Sinn Féin] suspects hid their heads and held their tongues. The next day the County Council turned up like a great party of undertakers in long black coats and tall hats (or as near thereunto as their wardrobes would permit) and presented addresses - chiefly full of the glories of courting, and drank port and departed in peace. Tomorrow there is to be a garden party on a grand scale - 500 guests at least are expected."

Birrell, in the same letter, then touched on the speedy return of Irish workers from Scotland for fear of being conscripted, the situation in the Balkans, and the pressure from the military for a stronger line with the Sinn Féiners, before turning to the old love of books he shared with Dillon. "There is a good Irish library here - I don't mean in Irish - but about Ireland - histories, biographies, novels, Catholic and Protestant - and well represented." Straying a little, he added "It is a thousand pities Irish Society has broken up; you want all sorts to make a Nation; even T. W. [Russell] and [Horace] Plunkett, [Joe] Devlin and [AE] [George Russell]." He ended the letter with a reference to a controversy in which Redmond had scored off Dr. Edward Thomas O'Dwyer. "That old Snake, the Bishop of Limerick," he said, "and his devilish cunning performance, playing the Pope and Christianity. Happily behind the Devil was his tail and he stood revealed."

After Adare, Birrell spent some very fine days touring Ireland's regions of beauty, "including one superb Sunday off Slen Head and the Blaskets", but a heavy heart pursued him all the way. Things were continuing to go badly in the war, and the slaughter in the horrible Gallipoli peninsula greatly depressed him. The Ghosts were going down to Hades before their day in appalling numbers, he said, but he believed somehow that they were on the verge of great events, that the waves of battle would ultimately come tumbling down on the side. As 1915 came to an end there was doubt as to whether Asquith could survive for long as prime minister, and a question mark hung also over the matter of conscription for Ireland. Her exclusion had been carried in the Cabinet, he said, with what he called "unanimity", coupled with a few deep growls, but he took no pleasure in the decision, for though conscription in Ireland was impossible, its omission might be fraught with grave political consequences thereafter. He did not mind what these might be.

The Birrell-Dillon correspondence flagged a bit at the beginning of 1916, but in March, when discipline of a Nationalist for Redmondian character was relaxed, Birrell was endeavouring to ensure that, for the sake of the future, no stirring of the smoking

embers of political strife would be done by the Unionists, by men like Long and Bullfour. "Of course there is a risk", he told Dillon.

and the possibilities of sporadic outrage, Ireland is once more a seething pot, and wherever there is a troublesome [parish] priest or half a dozen curates the Sinn Féiners fling up their caps and become unbecomingly and locally dangerous. How far [the old Fenian prisoner] T. J. Clarke (who is out on licence but has never observed the conditions of his liberty) is a really dangerous fellow I don't know, but he is the worst. Of course, we ought to have information from within about him and his movements, but we have none. Perhaps we ought to buy an informer: ... I would like to come into collision on good ground and in good cause, with the Irish [Sinn Féin] Volunteers and break their heads. But it is very difficult outside Dublin to secure such a rendez-vous, and inside Dublin, it might be too bloody and do harm. ... I don't say [the situation] is all unsatisfactory, but apart from bombs and isolated acts of villainy, engineered by two or three desperate men (who after all may exist in England or on the Clyde), I can't shake off the conviction that, first, there is not much in it and, second, that it would be made much worse by strong action by the State."

That summing-up occurs in the last of Birrell's dated letters in the preserved collection. It displays the miscalculation on which a rising could in any event have taken place. There was "not much in it" - that is to say, in the fear to which Dillon was no doubt subject, that something serious could happen. He was relying on his instinct, because of real information he had none. Compared with earlier times of which Dillon probably knew more than Birrell, police intelligence was extraordinarily deficient. They had none of the information from within that Birrell sighed for, with the result that the choosing of a "cause" and "a ground" was left to the Sinn Féiners, again using that term impressively.

Birrell was right in thinking that T. J. Clarke was a dangerous man, but he was not the only one. He was, however, the first signatory to the proclamation of the Irish Republic with which the Rising began. He was no stranger to Dillon. He had a little newsagent's shop not far from where Dillon lived in North Great George's Street, Dublin, and one of other of Dillon's boys used to buy papers there for their father on the way home from Sunday Mass. However, it would be wrong to think that it was the lack of police intelligence that allowed the Rising to take place. As we said at the very beginning of this article, the arrest of the German arms ship provided the Government with all the justification they needed to crack down on Clarke and his associates. To have done that on Easter Sunday or early on Easter Monday would have prevented the blood-spilling about which Birrell was so sensitive. It might also have changed the course of history.

Certainly any Roman would have been astonished to find Britain given pride of place, outweighing not only the Danube provinces but Italy herself, hub of the entire road system. But roads receive very cursory treatment. The diagrams on pages 17, 26 and 68 do not help the reader to appreciate much of the practical technique of building one, and the poor drawing of Roman surveyors at work hardly encourages understanding of the methods of planning employed.

The text is, in fact, a series of brief accounts of how Rome acquired her Empire, a story of war and conquest told many times before but seldom perhaps with so many comments of the reader that follows: "Note also, Gentle Reader, that the Burgundians were originally German - not, as I suspect you may have supposed, always an integral part of France." (of Cleopatra) "With Julius Caesar she was wholly successful; with Mark Antony she backed the wrong horse, or at any rate the losing horse". Unfortunately these lapses in acceptable literary style are not balanced by profound observations, even when they appear to have been intended. It is true (page 74) that most of Britain's largest towns today, in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool,

Favourite sites

By Norman Hammond

JAMES DYER:

The Penguin Guide to Prehistoric England and Wales
384pp. Allen Lane. £9.50.
0 7139 1164 6

In 1973 James Dyer produced *South-east England: An Archaeological Guide*, in which accurate description of sites was married to useful synopsis and citation of the published material on them. He has now stretched himself north and west into less familiar territory, while at the same time restricting himself (more or less) to the period before the Roman conquest. The latter was sensible, since Roger Wilson's *Guide to Roman Remains in Britain* already covers that period more than adequately, and the buildings of the Saxon and medieval periods are dealt with in a variety of publications. The geographical expansion has left marks of strain, however: some counties (such as Suffolk and Cambridgeshire) occupy less than a page each, and West Midlands is down to one paragraph; Wales is fairly fully covered, except for Gwent, which has only six entries. The fullest and best descriptions, as might be expected, are of Mr Dyer's old stamping-ground in the south and south-west of England.

The standard of reference is, at its best, both informative and up-to-date (Roger Mercer's 1980 book on Hambledon Hill is in, for instance), with a thorough combing of the national and county journals for excavation reports; it is a pity, however,

cavation reports: it is a pity, however, that Dyer has not mentioned that informative journal *Current Archaeology*, which is often several years ahead of the lapidary publications with its brief articles by excavators.

A random sampling of favourite sites yielded some surprises: the Cerne Abbas Giant, for which the earliest certain evidence is mid-seventeenth century, is said to be probably Roman and of the reign of Commodus and perhaps even from Age, while the Long Man of Wilmington is also given as "a likely survival from iron age times", an opinion Dyer does not share with many archaeologists.

The combination of sketch-maps (including trunk roads but omitting motorways) and precise National Grid references makes any site easy to locate with the aid of an OS map, but some of the descriptions are too laconic either to make the site seem worth visiting or to be of much use if one gets there. The short introduction crams chronology (using calibrated dates) into three pages which span 48,000 years, and admits of only three waves of immigration: in the early neolithic at about 4,000 bc, around 2,500 bc when beakers and metallurgy arrived, and in the first century bc when the Celtic Belgae settled south-east England. The remaining ten pages examine sites topically, as settlements, fortifications, burial places or ceremonial loci; a short and sensible beginning to a book of, on the whole, short and sensible descriptions. One of the nicest, and shortest, is of Boal House Cave at Creswell Crags in Derbyshire: "excavated using explosives; it produced the bones of hyena, bison and horse".

Historical systems

By Martin Henig

N. H. H. SITWELL:

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240pp, plus 95 colour plates, seven-teen figures and nine maps. Cassell. £12.95.
0 304 30075 6

N. H. H. Sitwell's book is arranged around a series of nine maps of the Roman Empire which he has drawn and lettered with loving care. One of them shows the extent of the Empire in the second century, five are devoted to the European Western Provinces (Britain, Spain, Gaul, Germany and Italy), one to European Eastern Provinces (under the heading of "Macedonia" and three to the rest of the Roman World (Africa, Egypt and Asia). In one sense the reader should not complain for the title of the volume specifies Europe, but then why do these other (on the whole) much more important areas appear at all?

Certainly any Roman would have been astonished to find Britain given pride of place, outweighing not only the Danube provinces but Italy herself, hub of the entire road system. But roads receive very cursory treatment. The diagrams on pages 17, 26 and 68 do not help the reader to appreciate much of the practical technique of building one, and the poor drawing of Roman surveyors at work hardly encourages understanding of the methods of planning employed.

The text is, in fact, a series of brief accounts of how Rome acquired her Empire, a story of war and conquest told many times before but seldom perhaps with so many comments of the reader that follows: "Note also, Gentle Reader, that the Burgundians were originally German - not, as I suspect you may have supposed, always an integral part of France." (of Cleopatra) "With Julius Caesar she was wholly successful; with Mark Antony she backed the wrong horse, or at any rate the losing horse". Unfortunately these lapses in acceptable literary style are not balanced by profound observations, even when they appear to have been intended. It is true (page 74) that most of Britain's largest towns today, in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool,

Leeds, Newcastle, Bristol - were small or non-existent in Roman times" but the Romans had a better eye for a good site than this statement implies. What about Winchester or Leicester or Exeter? Only the Industrial Revolution changed the geographical factors involved.

The plates are of variable quality and some are wrongly captioned. It is not true that the Great Bath at Bath has been drained and interesting material found beneath it; Barry Cunliffe's excavation was the spring of Sul Minerva. The road at Blackstone Edge, Yorkshire, may not be Roman. The temple captioned "the Maison Carrée at Nîmes" is in fact the temple of Livia at Vienne; the guardian lion at the entrance (sic) to the Roman road at Carthage is a marble table-leg, an lion of garden furniture. And what is a runestone with a Viking boat of the eighth century AD or a black figure vase with a Greek warship of the sixth century BC doing in this book?

The bibliography is as inconsistent as the rest of the work; ranging from learned articles in German to outdated, popular books in English. It shows wide reading but little attempt at critical selectivity. If, as the bibliography implies, any sort of serious reader has been envisaged, there should at least have been references in the text to ancient authorities on history and geography. Given his undoubted cartographic skills, it would be sad if Nigel Sitwell did not have another attempt at a survey of this kind. A book on the topography of Ancient Europe is badly needed.

Colin Speakman has assembled *A Yorkshire Dales Anthology* (223pp. Robert Hale. £8.95. 0 7091 8925 7) from the works of writers on the Pennine districts of Yorkshire. The extracts, both verse and prose, are grouped in sections entitled "The Railway Age", "The Local Community" and "The Landscape of Our Dreams". Drayton, Camden and Deane were among the first to note the beauties of the area during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and were succeeded by Gray, the Wordsworths, and others who found in the dramatic landscapes of the Dales the qualities of awfulness and sublimity in Nature sought by the Romantics.

Guiding the German economy

By Harold James

W. J. MOMMSEN (Editor):

The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany
1850-1950
433pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.
0 7099 1710 4

DAVID ABRAHAM:

The Collapse of the Weimar Republic
Political Economy and Crisis
366pp. Princeton University Press. £18.40 (paperback, £7.70).
0 691 09356 3

KARL HARDACH:

The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century
235pp. University of California Press. £13.50.
0 520 03809 6

DAVID CHILDS and JEFFREY JOHNSON:

West Germany: Politics and Society
231pp. Croom Helm. £10.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0 7099 0701 X

There is, as every schoolboy knows in this historical age, an uneasy relationship between the German past and present, and this is as true of economic as of political history. Since Germany is held to have followed a peculiar and separate path to modernity, Germans and foreign observers ask themselves how much the Bundesrepublik owes to past peculiarity; and whether there is any relation between the storminess of the German past and the postwar "Wirtschaftswunder", which has produced, according to the SPD's election slogan of 1976, a "Modell Deutschland".

One starting-point for examining what is specifically German in all this is the story of the creation of the German welfare state. This is the story of the "good Germany" of which no one needs to feel ashamed. In the immediate aftermath of the defeat of Hitler, Konrad Adenauer could say proudly "We must hold on to this social insurance. We are proud of it. And as for the proposals that Beveridge has recently made in Hamburg, I can only say that we Germans have already had such things these past thirty years."

H.-G. Hockerts in Wolfgang Mommensen's interesting collection of essays, emphasizes how the Bonn Republic looked self-consciously back to Bismarck's social legislation; and J. Tammke shows how state paternalism antedated even Bismarck. Social legislation was of great political importance because the state had an obvious artificiality and used social welfare policies to make itself look more naturally legitimate. Bismarck's Reich of 1871 appeared as insecure initially as the Weimar and Bonn republics did later.

The British were suspicious of Germany: P. Henckell shows how, although the Liberal reforms of 1911 were preceded by numerous study trips to Germany, Lloyd George in the end was widely supported in rejecting the German system as over-bureaucratized and inimical to the individual. Nevertheless, British developments produced eventually a system not unlike the German one: after the Second World War the Germans introduced a fully universal insurance principle, while in this country the Wilson government later modified the scale of benefits to correlate them with contributions, thus adopting the old German principle of which Adenauer had been so proud. At the end of the Mommensen collection, social scientists offer general comments on the welfare state which indicate the scope of the consensus in modern Germany: all paths seem to have led to the same destination. P. Flora is slightly unhappy to find himself there: modern social legislation has acted as a crisis generator instead of solving crises in the Bismarckian manner. K. Deutsch in a rather silly little piece believes the welfare state will only work if it is extended into an international welfare community which devotes the sums now spent on the arms race to a new kind of aid race.

The most stimulating essays in the collection set the question of social policy into an overall economic context: from this perspective the articles on the interwar years are most revealing, as this was the period when some analysts argued that a new and generous welfare policy could smooth out the imperfections of the economic cycle. Public charity might produce public prosperity. At the same time others argued that the cost of insurance against unemployment and for pensions was too high and was placing a drag on economic performance. So there was a highly political debate as it was realized that the kind of welfare policy pursued would dictate the kind of economic development, and that this in turn would create the political climate. The alternatives were to remodel welfare in order to encourage universal consumption or to enforce universal austerity for some future and greater good.

Weisbrod and Wolfsohn describe the attacks made on German welfare policy as the depression began; while in a fascinating essay Robert Skidelsky claims that both the British Treasury and Keynes ignored the structural realities of the 1930s economy. The civil servants had accepted a watered-down Keynesianism: Skidelsky implies that they should have concentrated much more on encouraging dynamic industries through public investment. Planning, rather than welfare policy was required; they were not the same thing since planning would help the strong rather than the weak, but it was difficult for governments in the 1930s (as it is indeed now) to pick out the winners in the economic race.

David Abraham's book examines the connections between social and economic policy by analysing the relations between the dominant social groups in inter-war Germany in terms of a contest between economic losers and winners. The book is intended as a contribution to a theoretical debate on the social foundations of democracy: Weimar democracy could have worked, Abraham suggests, if export industries had been able to lend a bloc of industrial and capitalist peasants appealing for support to small shopkeepers and white-collar workers. Instead, although they were "hegemonic" between 1925 and 1930, they failed to maintain the grip on power they had established during the Stresemann years, since the peasants agreed with the large estate-owners of the East that the state's policy was creating an agricultural crisis.

By 1930, according to Abraham, the heavy industrialists, with their much more old-fashioned views on labour relations, were back in the saddle, and obtained the support of the agricultural East. The peasants were hostile, however, to a tariff policy which put up the price of their animal feedstuffs; while the big industrialists could no longer hope for voting support and gave up working through political parties. In May 1932, these men helped the estate owners to overthrow Brüning's presidential dictatorship and to set up instead a regime under Papen as Reich Chancellor which had practically no support in the Reichstag. Papen's unstable government was followed by that of General Schleicher, who was repugnant to industry because he wanted to export industrial support from organized labour in 1933. Hitler's government opened the way for a continuation of the experiments of the Papen period at the same time as it excluded organized labour from the political process.

In developing his argument, Abraham conducts a certain polemic against those who follow Charles Maier in seeing the Weimar Republic as a corporatist state capable of reconciling competing interests; if this were so, Abraham retorts, how did Nazism establish itself? Brüning certainly admired Mussolini's corporatism, but he was unable to imitate it: he could not construct any kind of mass following and indeed was a thoroughly bad way in which, though heavy industry and the exporters disagreed about trade policy, they could be brought together in opposition to the inflated share of the national income which went on wages. Real hourly earnings rose until 1931 and wages formed a high proportion of the costs bill for industry (higher for the older industries). While the SPD, as the repre-

sentative of labour, stood in the way of any drastic cut in wages, the Nazis seemed to promise more as, although they called themselves the National Socialist German Workers' Party, they were rather obviously something more than an economic pressure group. Goebbels raised industrial hopes by saying that "wage cuts for the sake of reparations and the current system are unacceptable, but in a national system they would be acceptable."

Abraham comes close to Skidelsky in his criticisms of the SPD's economic proposals, though he tackles the problem from a different angle. Neither the concept of economic democracy (set out in the years of stabilization), nor that of increased consumption as a result of public works (set out in the Depression), had, he claims, any emotional appeal. He might have added that neither proposal included the objective of directing the course of economic development. Investment planning might have been better - but there was no adequate political apparatus in the Weimar Republic for carrying this through. In the 1930s state regulation did lead to a sort of direction of investment, but it was very crude.

Abraham starts from an avowedly Marxist position and indeed his sharp division between the coal and steel industries on the one hand and manufacturing industry (chemicals, textiles, machine tools, electrical goods and, in Abraham's account, brown iron producers) on the other is familiar from the East German literature, though there it is drawn more subtly. His argument that one sector was more progressive politically and economically depends on some rather questionable manipulation of the figures: the contrast between the fast expansion of the dynamic fraction of German industry in the 1920s, as a result of the inflow of American money, and the stagnation of heavy industry is made with production indexes using 1913 as base-year. If these are recalculated to a base of 1925 (which the Nazis started to do) the dramatic prosperity of brown coal disappears altogether and only the chemical industry looks significantly "better" than hard coal or steel. The rapid growth of these "newer" industries took place in other words before the period that Abraham is considering - during the war and the years of subsequent inflation. Again, his own tables show that wages formed a higher proportion of costs in the metal finishing and even in the electro-technical industries than in the modernized iron and steel plants.

Cultural and ideological explanations need to be found for entrepreneurial mentalities within firms there were, and this is hardly surprising. Differences about the correct economic policy to pursue; and export industrialists as well as steel men soaked up anti-labour ideologies.

Abraham is aware that this makes it difficult to formulate any general model, and his consequent unease in dealing with day-to-day political events leads to occasional factual inaccuracies and some unhelpfully opaque prose: "the important question is not how 'fascist' was industry, nor how intimately involved were its leaders in the backstage events leading to Hitler's appointment. The bourgeoisie saw no other way out of the crisis; it decided 'consciously', in favour of the Nazis."

The trouble is that during the Depression all kinds of conflict broke out, and the central institutions charged with representing sectional interests were helpless. Among Abraham's "frictions", the Bavarians complained about Saxon advantages and vice versa; small producers protested against the big ones; those with access to Russian orders were attacked by those producing for the French markets. People who had been trained to complain now did so in a deafening crescendo, as there was more to complain about. In the resultant cacophony it did matter whose vocal apparatus was nearest to the ear-trumpet of the decaying Field Marshal, in the Reich President's palace.

Karl Hardach's book is more limited in its aims than Abraham's and as a result more successful in fulfilling them. *The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century* was published in German in 1976. It provides an apparently less ideologically

committed alternative to the two existing textbooks on twentieth-century German economic history: the liberal one of Günter Stolper (with additional chapters by Karl Häuser and Knut Borchardt), which conducts a polemic against state planning, and the Marxist one of Hans Mottek (with Walter Becker and Alfred Schröter), which describes the anarchy resulting from unplanned monopolization. Hardach's version is somewhat nationalistic - bitterly critical of American lenders in the 1920s, and sympathetic to some of the results of Nazi economic planning.

Most of the book is devoted to the years after 1945, and it ends with the failure of centralized planning in the Democratic Republic and the beginning of systematic (and fairly centralized) planning in the Federal Republic. The last pages describe the 1967 "Law for Promoting Stability and Growth in the Economy", which represented one of the most ambitious legislative embodiments of the principle of a guided economy in the western world. It is unfortunate that this 1981 English edition could not have been up-dated to bring out the lesson of the 1970s, that stability and growth are not easily compatible: the West German economy shrank by 2.5 per cent in 1975 and grew by a spectacular 5.3 per cent in the election year of 1976. Some of

the traditional problems of economic and political life remain unsolved by Karl Schiller's 1967 Law: there are still conflicts over regional policy and between demands for monetary stability and attempts to regulate the labour market. It is interesting to speculate about the kind of political mechanism needed to deal with disputes such as these, but it is happily clear that no David Abraham of the future will be able to write a book on the failure of the Bonn government.

David Childs and Jeffrey Johnson are not equipped with Abraham's sophistication, though they are, so they say in the Preface to *West Germany: Politics and Society*, "fascinated by the reemergence of this dynamic neighbour", even if they express doubts about its stability. Their work is intended as an up-to-date textbook and its strength lies in the quantity of information it provides. It also has some avoidable weaknesses. The results of the 1980 elections are banished to the obscurity of the Chronological Table and there is no account of the number of seats won by the various parties in the Bundestag. Secondly, at a time when we in Britain are worried about our own electoral system, it is sad that a textbook on West Germany should describe the Federal Republic's proportional representation system in-correctly.

by those who knew him well, which is entering its final pre-publication stage, I would like to hear from anyone who knows of any items not cited in the bibliography of my *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (1980).

Robert M. Seiler, Department of English, The University Drive NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4.

Terence Smith, co-editor of *Writing* (1947-52), plays (under his own name, and occasionally as Terence MacGibbon) a Dublin character, born 1911. I would appreciate he from anyone who has known and/or could give any information on his fate since spring 1979.

Martin Koon Bosplaat 28, 1025 AT Amst

Wyndham Lewis: for a new, illustrated edition of his travel book on Morocco, *Filibusters in Barbary* (1932), any information on present whereabouts of drawings Lewis did during his Moroccan trip.

C. J. Fox, 2 Camac Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 6NX.

Walter Pater (1839-94): for an edition of recollections and tributes



The German statesman Friedrich Ebert, by George Grosz, c 1923; one of a magnificent collection of modern works reproduced in the catalogue to Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum (see also the picture and caption on page 864 for details, and the picture on the cover of this issue).

Speech of figures

By Roy Foster

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS:

An Atlas of Irish History
Second edition
286pp. Methuen. £8.50.
(paperback, £3.95)
0 416 74820 1

Topography and cartography act as guides to Irish history in a way not always provided by literary narrative. This is demonstrated not only by W. A. McCutcheon's monumental *Irish Atlas* and J. H. Andrews's study of the Ordnance Survey, but also, on a different level, by Brian Friel's masterly play *Translations* (at the Lyttelton Theatre from August 26; reviewed in the TLS on October 26, 1980). The first edition of Ruth Dudley Edwards's *Atlas of Irish History* in 1973 was innovative and compre-

hensive, delivering some surprising and sophisticated emphases in a format which was adapted for use at all levels of education: it rapidly became an indispensable textbook, not least because of the novel angle from which it approached the evidence. A new edition is nonetheless to be welcomed, adding as it does much that has elapsed in emphasis over the last eight years, notably the reversal in emigration trends and the shift towards a preponderantly youthful population.

To W. H. Bromage's excellent original maps have been added new figures by Neil Hyslop. The political diagrams are also able to utilize three additional sets of election statistics for the Republic (and the third edition will, on the current showing, no doubt have access to many more). There is new material on Ireland in the EEC and on the status and employment-patterns of women, including a significant table showing the proportion of female Dail members who have sat there as "relatives

of a dead T.D. or patriot". Two new sections on "The Anglo-Irish War" and "The Civil War" reflect developments in historiography since the first edition; the section on Northern Ireland, also expanded, is judiciously balanced and deliberately low-key; here above all figures speak louder than words.

There are data, such as farm sizes, for which histograms could have been advantageously used in opposition to maps; and the absence of colour in the illustrations is to be regretted, for without it such maps as those showing the distribution of the Irish in America, or Catholics in Ulster, are less immediately comprehensible than they might have been. There is matter for a really large-scale volume, illustrating the depth of statistical analysis currently being assembled in the annals of the *New History of Ireland*, and combining it with an incisive and explicit historical commentary. No one is better qualified than Ruth Dudley Edwards to do it.